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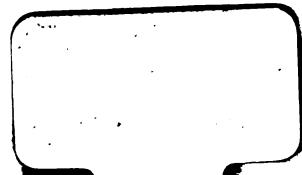
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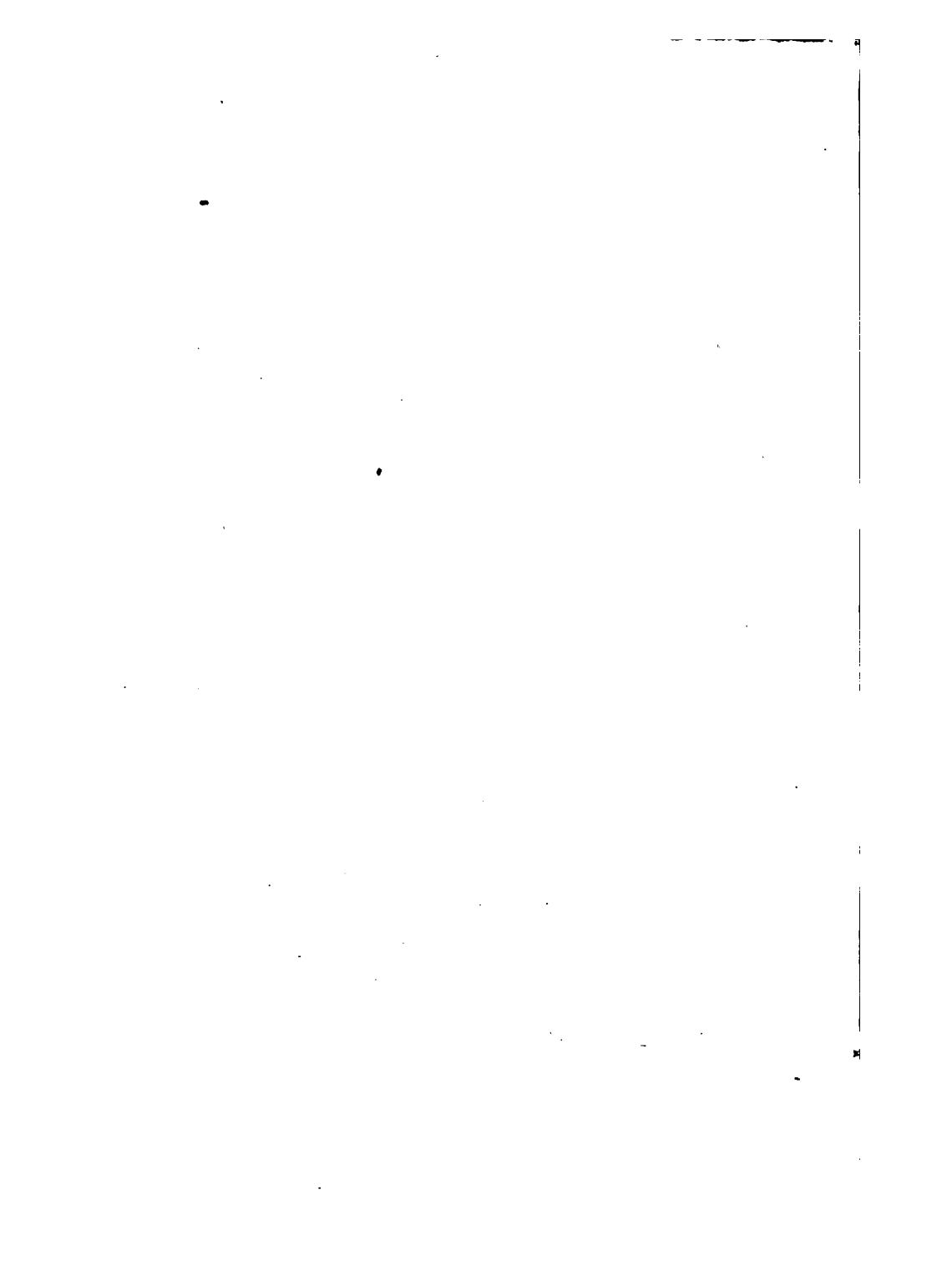






**A**

**FRIEND AT COURT.**



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# FRIEND AT COURT.

A. Nobel.

BY

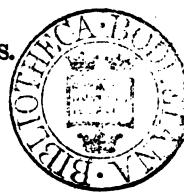
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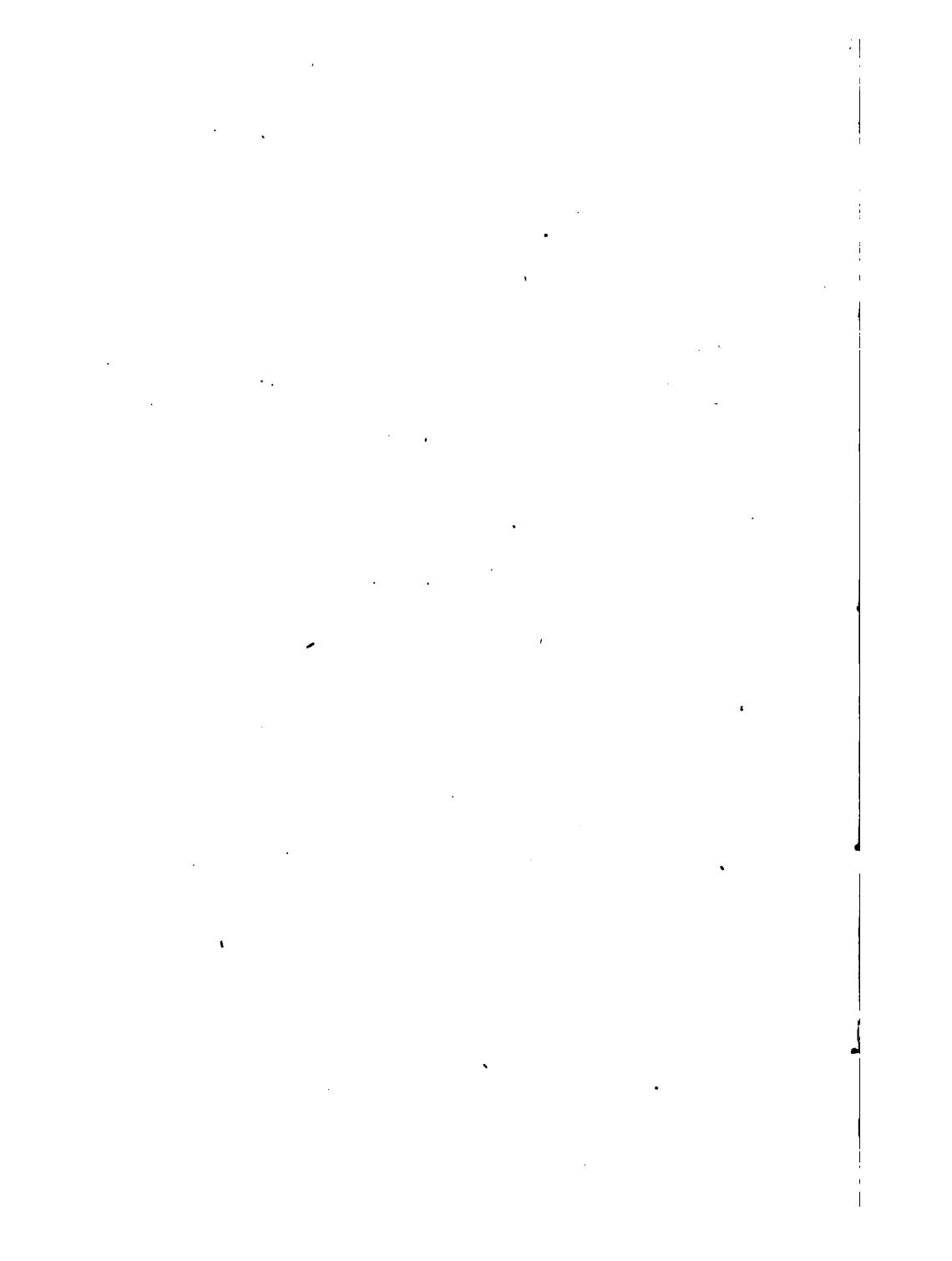
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# A FRIEND AT COURT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AN OLD MAID'S CONFESSION.

**M**OWBRAY was now so charmed with his new position that he quite regretted that the season was rapidly coming to a close. Ever since he had left Oxford, thanks to his uncle and his father's friends, he had enjoyed to the full all the charms which well-bred and agreeable society can offer. But now he began to breathe a social atmosphere a little more rarefied. Lord Salamis had spoken kindly to certain very great dames about his private secretary, had put his name down for the "Eupatridæ" (that exclusive coterie where one black ball excludes) and always sauntered down to the House with

him arm in arm, so that Kit was beginning to feel, thanks to this reflected greatness, almost famous.

The portals of the ministerial and fashionable world opened before him, and his name now always figured as having been present at the assemblies, balls, and other hospitalities of the great, which were now at the close of the season following each other in rapid succession. When he rode in the Row in the morning (often with little Violet, for between the two an immense affection now subsisted, and the child had even declared that she was in love with Mr. Mowbray !) before visiting the Board, his progress was one constant series of salutations. Strangers when they met him, looked at each other hard and said, "That's the young fellow one sees about so often with Salamis ! Who the deuce is he ?" His former friends—some working in grimy chambers and longing after briefs, others poring over ledgers as junior partners in their fathers' counting-houses, studied to make better acquaintance with him, and treated him with considerable attention.

Indeed, the number of people who were now desirous of being enrolled among *ses intimes*, was certainly astonishing. Be successful, and every by-path leads to the road of friendship—it's only failure that finds no thoroughfare.

Since his promotion the *Censor* too had been unusually civil to him. Kingairloch was away in Limeshire examining the Barillon papers, and Kit had been asked by the sub-editor to furnish various special articles containing such information as he could justly supply from his own private knowledge of political affairs. For these contributions he was paid very handsomely, and here as on every other occasion he found how much he was indebted to his chief.

It was the custom of Lord Salamis always at one o'clock to order a cup of black coffee, and to indulge in the luxury of a midday cigar. As soon as he had got his long and full-flavoured weed well under weigh, and had ensconced himself in a roomy cane rocking-chair, he sent for Kit. If nothing very pressing was doing, the two would

chat, or if letters had to be written, this was the time which the statesman generally chose for dictating them. Lord Salamis was of course aware of Kit's connexion with the *Censor*, and when in the mood used to criticise with no sparing hand the literary productions of his subordinate. A passionate lover of Horace—indeed Lord Salamis studied the odes and satires of the genial pagan like a breviary—he was never weary of laying down the Horatian law for all true composition:—

“ Oh yes, believe me, you must draw your pen  
Not once or twice, but o'er and o'er again,  
Through what you've written, if you would entice  
The man who reads you once to read you twice ;  
Not making popular applause your cue,  
But looking to find audience fit, though few.”

And therefore, when any of Kit's articles came before his notice, he would praise them or rail at them according to their deserts, and then generally end his remarks by laughingly saying, “The words of Horace, however, do not apply to you, Mowbray, or your brother journalists. You men who write only to be read once, and for audiences not fit, but many. Newspaper literature is

a bad school to be trained up in. You affect knowledge when you are ignorant, and teach when you ought to be taught. In fact, you manufacture your erudition and garble your opinions. Archbishop Whately used to thank Heaven that he had never given a penny to a beggar; with equal sincerity, I thank Heaven that I have never given a consulship to a journalist. Newspapers may be considered as literature, but they are only literature in the same sense that doctors and solicitors are considered society."

Perhaps the aversion to journalism, always strong in Lord Salamis, was due in a great measure to the fact that the bitterest enemies of his political career had been certain daily and weekly papers. And yet, whilst abusing newspaper literature, he never hesitated during these midday interviews, to give Kit little bits of intelligence concerning political matters for the especial use of the *Censor*, and to take some interest in the manner in which it was worked up by his secretary. To rail at an object, and at the same time most valuably

to support it was not an uncommon thing with the Lord President of Convention. Davus never found Horace at times more inconsistent than did Kit Lord Salamis.

Such special information was most valuable, and tended not a little to increase the circulation of the *Censor*. And many a quiet laugh did Kit enjoy with his chief over the unblushing egotism of that paper on these occasions. No matter whether Kit informed its sub-editor that the Government intended at last to drop a certain measure which the country found unpopular, or to pass a certain Act which at first it had intended to ignore, the *Censor*, though perhaps having been all the while silent on the subject, coolly took upon itself the entire credit for this change of ministerial tactics. "We are happy to inform our readers," grandly came out the journal on these occasions, "that at last, after our repeated observations on the subject (oh, most mendacious of papers!) the Government has had the good sense to accept our advice, and to abandon a measure which," &c. Or else it

ran thus:—"Our columns have ever been zealous in advocating, against the hostility of the present ministry, the benefits which would accrue to the body politic from the passing of this Act; we have therefore much pleasure in announcing that in obedience to the remonstrances which we have never ceased urging, the right honourable gentleman at the head of the Government has now expressed his intention of strenuously supporting a cause which," &c. *Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

One morning as Kit was arranging the letters of Lord Salamis, previous to forwarding them into Kent, where his chief was then staying for a few days, at his little box (his Sabine Farm, as he called it), he came across a note from his sister Rosa, which he had forgotten to open. He took it up and read its contents. After relating the usual domestic matters which the writer thought would interest her brother, it went on to say:—"Muriel and I have become excellent friends, and I am sure you are wrong in looking upon her as a coquette. She is very nice, and I am quite regretting the loss of

her society, as she went to town the day before yesterday. She is staying with a cousin of hers, a Mrs. Delamere, in Wilton Crescent. You might call. I told her that I would write to you and let you know that she was going up to London. She said, 'I am sure it will not interest Mr. Mowbray; he is very offended with me. Pray do not ask him to do anything out of mere politeness which he would rather avoid doing.' I answered, 'I am sure Kit is not offended with you. I know he was hurt at your being, as he said, rather cold to him when he last met you, because I had always understood you were such excellent friends in Germany.' 'Yes, we were,' she replied sadly; 'but——' And then she paused. I thought she would say something more, but she did not, and turned the conversation. She is so reserved about talking of you that I am sure she is attached to you. She begged me to offer you her congratulations upon your being made private secretary. I find that Lord Salamis is a cousin of Muriel's father, and that she knows him very well. She says he is very nice, though she stands

rather in awe of him. By the way, young Mr. Lambert proposed to her last week ! There is news ! Of course she rejected him, but he still thinks that a woman's 'no' is not irrevocable, for he takes every opportunity of hovering about her, and trying to do the agreeable. It is no news to tell you, I suppose, that Mr. Scrope is in the neighbourhood. He says you are very fortunate." And then the letter went on to discuss various family matters of no particular interest.

"Of course I shall call," said Kit to himself, "and be coldly polite. So Lambert has had his *congé*?" And he leant back in his chair and thought of all the associations of the past which were connected in his mind with Muriel, and how sanguine had been his hopes that she would return his passion and give a lie to the proverb that true love never runs smooth. "How different she was when I met her at Dartvennis ! What could have induced the change ? I wonder whether her father has forbidden her to think of me ? And yet the squire seemed so friendly and cordial to me—nothing could be kinder. Ah, well ! when we meet I am determined to

ferret the truth out of Miss Barillon. Odd, after all the girls I have been introduced to that she seems to be the one object of interest to me! *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.* Well, I was pretty heart-whole till I met that little witch, and I am certainly always reverting to her in my thoughts. Let me see, when can I call? Oh, the day after to-morrow will do very well!"

He was interrupted in his musings by a messenger entering his room with a card in his hand.

"A gentleman wishes to see you, sir." And the man put the card on Kit's table—Mr. Triardos Kontangopadatta, Throgmorton Street, E.C., and New Bond Street, W.

"A Greek gentleman, I suppose, Collins?" said Kit. "I don't know him. Show him in."

"He looks a foreigner, sir, but of what country I couldn't say—all foreigners is so much alike. He ain't English, sir," and the messenger retired. The next minute he ushered in the stranger. He was a little

fat, Sancho Panza looking man, with bandy legs, bald head, short black beard and moustache, a bulbous nose, little twinkling eyes, and a complexion like a new saddle. In the stranger's appearance and in the peculiar manner he spoke English it was evident that he was a foreigner. Kit motioned him to a chair, and after an obsequious bow the little man sat down.

"My name, perhaps, is not unknown to you, sir?" said he, drawing off his gloves and placing his hat on a side table. "I have a large acquaintance at the West End and especially in the army, navy, and civil service—indeed I almost limit my practice to the Queen's services. I hate vulgar people."

"You are unknown to me," said Kit curtly and leaning back in his chair. "You come, I presume, on some official business? Lord Salamis is out of town, but I have no doubt I can answer any questions you wish to put."

"My business is quite private, sir. It is you I wish to see, and not Lord Salamis—

though as a compatriot I should always be proud to see his lordship. You live in Duke Street?"

Kit at the present time was occupying the rooms of his cousin—the second son of the Colonel—who had just lately been gazetted to the Bombardiers, which were now at Windsor.

"Yes," said Kit, astonished; "but pray what has that to do with you?"

"Something; I hope—something," said the man, smiling pleasantly. "You young men of fashion of course must find life in town very expensive—balls, dinners, the opera, the theatres, and in fact all the pleasures of life cannot be enjoyed for a mere song, can they, my gentleman? And then fathers are so ungenerous and old aunts wont die—amazing what an antidote the Three per Cents are to mortality!—and so we come occasionally to Queer Street, my gentleman; don't we, now?" And the man put his ugly little head bewitchingly, as he thought, on one side.

"May I ask what this has to do with me?" said Kit, haughtily, and rising.

“What do you want Mr.—Mr.—” And Kit referred to the man’s card.

“Yes it is a long name, sir; don’t trouble yourself to pronounce it. But it’s a good name, my gentleman—good as gold—there ain’t a man in the City that would gainsay that, I can tell you! And mum’s the word with me, sir,” said the little man putting his yellow hands on the knees of his trousers and bending forward confidentially towards Kit. “Never any *exposé* with *me*, never any intimidation, never any legal proceedings—all as safe as the Bank and as smooth as velvet! And I’m liberal too, my gentleman! No sham pictures, no Bermondsey sherry, no Whitechapel havannahs, but hard cash paid on the nail up to the very last quid agreed upon.”

“Oh, I see,” said Kit, contemptuously, and sitting in his chair again. “I do not require your services. Good morning.”

“No, my gentleman, you don’t want my services now perhaps, but when next you do pray give me a turn. You’ll find my terms much easier than the others in the business; why they’re regular sharpers they are!”

"*Will* you leave my room?" said Kit sternly, and with a touch of temper in the tone of his voice.

"Oh, don't be angry, my gentleman," said the man, still seated in his chair, and with a mean smug smile overspreading his face, "it ain't often that gents lose their temper with me, 'cos I'm so obliging; don't you be an exception to the rule, sir."

"I have asked you to leave my room," said Kit, with his hand on the bell-rope; "I shall not ask you again——"

"Oh, don't ring, sir! don't ring! two is company and three is none, that's my maxim. But why wont you do business with me? I've got one of your bills in my pocket and I know you have had to pay pretty smart terms for the sum — 'cos I know the firm."

"One of my bills in your pocket?" asked Kit astonished, and leaving hold of the bell-rope.

"In course I have," said the man, "I took it in the way of business—it's due next month—so if you want to renew why renew with me. I always like obliging you gents

who have got fixed berths—you ain't here one day and in California the next."

"Pray let me look at that bill—there must be some mistake" said Kit, stretching out his hand. "I have never drawn a bill in my life."

"Oh, none of your larks!" said the man suspiciously, "the bill is yours fast enough; there you are—address, 'Duke Street,' signature, 'C. Mowbray.' Can't get over that, I should think, my gentleman?"

Kit glanced at the bill. It was as he surmised; a promissory note drawn by his cousin, whose Christian name was also Christopher, and who had ever since he joined his regiment taken far too freely to what excitement calls the pleasures of the town.

"This bill is for 200*l.*," said Kit, opening a drawer and taking out a cheque-book; "if you wait a minute I will write you out a cheque for the amount."

"Oh, you are very good, Mr. Mowbray—very good; but you know the bill don't come due till next month. There is no hurry sir, no hurry; and I didn't come

about that. I only wanted to introduce myself, and to let you know that I do business much cheaper than those who advanced you the money."

"There is the cheque for the amount," said Kit, "and now have the goodness to give me that bill."

The fat little man took up the cheque, examined it and said, "You'll excuse me, Mr. Mowbray, you'll excuse me, but business you know *is* business. It's only for *very* old customers that I take cheques: there is such a lot of rummy paper nowadays about that one must be cautious—caution to a man like me, sir, means capital—but no offence, sir, no offence."

Kit wrote out another cheque made payable to self, rang the bell, and told the messenger to take it to a Mr. Atkins, who was the Treasurer of the Board, and ask him to be good enough to cash it.

"I am sorry to give you so much trouble, sir, very sorry," said the money-lender, and the messenger quitted the room. "What a splendid fine room you've got," added he, looking about the apartment; "splendid,

fine. Here is your bill, sir—must be all square with a gent who occupies a room like this all to himself.” And he placed the bill on Kit’s writing table.

“ You will find the *Times* by your side ; the messenger will be back in a minute,” said Kit, taking up the bill and putting it in his pocket.

“ Thank you, sir, I have read the paper. But I want to have a little further chat with you, sir, if you please. I shouldn’t wonder if we could do a little business together, after all,” and he sidled up to Kit and looked very coaxing. “ You see, my gentleman, when you want money, you think of course you must borrow it at high interest, but you needn’t do that. A swell like you, who knows what’s going on behind the scenes, and who is in an office which has direct relations with every kingdom on the Continent, need never want money—a good use of his private information would bring him in money. Now, look here, sir ; I have an interest in a stock-brokering firm in the City,” said the man, approaching Kit confidentially, “ and if you only let me know when it’s the right

time to buy or sell stock, you may have what coin you want for the asking. There ! is it a bargain ?”

“ You infernal scoundrel !” roared Kit, losing his temper ; “ so you dare attempt to bribe me, do you ?” And he caught hold of the man’s coat collar with his left hand, and taking a hunting thong which lay beside the table, applied it most vigorously to the shoulders and to a region still lower, of the fleshy little money-lender.

“ Stop that !” said the man softly, “ or I’ll have you up for assault and battery.”

“ Have me up if you like,” replied Kit, still laying on the thong ; “ that bill is not mine, but a relative’s, whom I am anxious to see out of the clutches of such infernal vampires as you and your crew, and so you’ll receive the money ; but for daring to insult me, I’ll give you payment in another form.” And lash, lash went the thong on the man’s shoulders. The fellow wriggled and moaned, but dared not cry out lustily for fear of making an *exposé* of himself, which would be ruinous, and Kit, at last tired with the work, threw the man from him,

who, utterly cowed like a whipped spaniel, said—

“ I beg your pardon, sir—I didn’t mean to offend you—I only put the question in the way of business—never thought you were so fiery, sir.” And the man smiled a cringing, fawning smile.

“ Have the goodness to say no more.” Just then the messenger returned with the money and left the room.

“ Now, give me a receipt for this 200/-”

The man obeyed, and Kit then handed the sum to him.

“ Now, quit my room instantly!”

“ I hope you aren’t offended with me, sir ! Don’t say anything about it, sir ! Please don’t, sir,” said the Greek, humbly. “ I didn’t mean——”

“ Leave the room,” said Kit, rising ; “ or——” And he took hold of the thong meaningly.

“ I’m going, sir, I’m going. Good morning !” And Mr. Kontangopadatta darted out of the room.

Kit saw him enter his brougham after swearing at a half-starved, dissipated clerk

who accompanied him, and who held the door of the carriage open for him.

By the next post Kit wrote to his cousin, telling him of the adventure and how he had paid the bill. "And now, my dear fellow," he continued, "I don't profess to be much better off than you are, but I can wait till it is quite convenient for you to settle with me. Take your own time, but promise me solemnly that you will never have any further dealings with the money-lending tribe. That promise I exact, and if you refuse it, I shall at once communicate the matter to Uncle William. If you want money, your father is the proper person for you to apply to. Have you any other bills out against you?" And the following day Kit received an answer from his boy cousin, who declared that that was the only bill out against him, that he would have no more business with usurers, as he only borrowed 120*l.* for three months, and for that he had to promise to pay 200*l.*—"which is rather crushing in my present financial position. But I promise all you wish, and hope after Goodwood to be able to repay you all right.

Next time I want coin I shall certainly ask the governor—it's a deal cheaper. Come up any day you like and lunch with me at Maidenhead, and I'll pull you up the river. Is it agreed, my Mentor?"

And so ended this little incident. The young Bombardier did not, however, make the "pot of money" he expected over Goodwood, but he told his father the state of his affairs, and promised for the future to live within his income.

"I should strongly advise you to do so," said the Colonel, sternly. "If I hear any more of this kind of thing, you sell out, and take to farming. I shall send Kit a cheque ; he has acted most kindly in this matter. He's a true Mowbray—proud of his name, and not given to trail it in the mire with money-lenders and bill-discounters. Imitate his example, sir!"

It was the same day as the visit from Mr. Kontangopadatta that Kit, descending the steps of the Board after office hours, met Pemberton, who was about to enter his well-appointed Stanhope that awaited him at the door.

"Hallo, Mowbray, old man, what are you going to do?" asked Pemberton, cheerily.

"Going to my rooms to write," said Kit.

"Come out for a drive? I'm going to see an old aunt of mine who lives at Norwood, a kindly old soul, who has remembered me in her will, so I am always very dutiful. She dines at six, and though the hour is abominable, for a lone lorn crittur her dinners are not. Come with me!"

Kit hesitated—the day was beautiful, his writing, he thought, could stand over, and he succumbed to the temptation. As the two went bowling along towards Battersea, Kit told his friend of his morning's adventure.

"Oh, the old thief!" ejaculated Pemberton, "I know him well. He touts all over the town for clients, as he calls them, and sells you up most unmercifully when he has sucked you sufficiently dry. He's the man who got Hamilton, of the Aeronaut Department, into that awful row by bribing him to accept a certain tender. I'm glad you thrashed the fellow—he well deserves it!"

He's lured many a poor fly into his accursed web, and seems to batten upon his prey, for he's as rich as a Jew. The mare goes well, don't she?"

And the mare went so well through the leafy lanes and dusty roads, that in less than an hour's time the two had arrived at their destination—a small, well-kept villa standing in its own grounds in Upper Norwood. Kit was ushered into the drawing-room of the little villa, and introduced to Miss Pemberton, a tall, elderly lady, who greeted him with a most cordial shake of the hand. But kindly as was that stately dame, and pleasant to look upon as was her well-preserved face, Kit's eyes immediately turned their gaze towards another elderly lady, who had also risen from her seat on the entrance of the young men.

"How do you do, Miss Lysaght? This is indeed a pleasant surprise! I had heard that Miss Barillon was in town, but I had no idea that I should have so soon the good fortune of seeing you." And Kit shook hands warmly with that lady, who it ap-

peared was an old friend of Miss Pemberton's, and had come up from Limeshire "about her teeth."

"And so you know my friend, Miss Lysaght, Mr. Mowbray?" said Miss Pemberton. "How very nice! Of course you will stop to dinner?"

"Brought him here on purpose," answered Dick. "I felt shy about it though, because Mowbray is rather a particular man; so, if I were you, Aunt, I'd just speak to the cook about the whitebait—she makes them rather too greasy. I suppose I get out the wine as usual? I told Mowbray about that Johannisberg of yours; nothing would induce him to come down here with me until I mentioned that choice vintage, and then he changed his mind like a shot. Suppose I make a cup? Mowbray is awfully fond of cup——"

"I hope you don't believe him, Miss Pemberton," said Kit, laughing. "I am afraid he is making me out an epicure for his own purposes."

"I don't know," said that lady, shaking her head and looking affectionately at her

nephew, who was playing tricks with a long-haired skye terrier ; " You young men of the present day are so very particular. There's Dick, who when coming down here always encloses a *ménus* for me to follow, and makes as much fuss as if he were an alderman. And to think that I can remember the time when it was thought a luxury to have bitter ale handed round in needle glasses after dinner ! But as you are such an epicure," added she, smiling upon Kit, " I feel the honour of my house at stake, and must therefore superintend matters myself. Come into the next room, Dick, and I will give you the keys of the cellar."

" We'll do what we can to give you a decent dinner in these benighted parts, Mowbray," said Dick ; and aunt and nephew quitted the room.

Miss Lysaght, when left alone with Kit, congratulated him on his success at the Board, asked him sundry matters concerning his duties, said how delighted she was to have had the good fortune of hearing his father preach at Dartvennis, but never men-

tioned Muriel's name, or anything concerning her.

"By the way," said Kit, carelessly, "I hear Miss Barillon is in town. I intend to do myself the pleasure of calling on her tomorrow or the day after."

"How did you know she was in London?" asked Miss Lysaght.

"I had a letter from my sister this morning telling me so."

"Muriel is only stopping in London a few days. I wouldn't put yourself out about calling," said Miss Lysaght, rather nervously.

"You say that, Miss Lysaght," said Kit a little stiffly, "as if you would rather me not call."

"Well, no; I don't mean that," said she, hesitating and fidgetting with her hands; "at least I think you and Muriel are better away from each other."

"And pray why?" asked Kit, astonished. "When we were in Germany you were not of that opinion?"

"No; but then I didn't look upon matters perhaps as I ought. I regard your

acquaintanceship in a different light now."

"Again I ask why?" said Kit, smiling.

"You know it will never do for you two to get fond of each other," said Miss Lysaght, in a kind of nervous gulp.

"And do you think there is any danger of our getting fond of each other?" asked Kit, smiling.

"You know about yourself the best; but as for Muriel, I know she is fond of you; she has told me so herself," said the simple lady, "and it will never do."

"Why will it never do?" asked Kit quietly, though his heart was beating beneath the influence of a new excitement.

"Because Mr. Barillon would never give his consent to such an union."

"Does Mr. Barillon object to me, then?"

"I don't think he does personally, but he wishes Muriel to marry a rich man. Andrew Lambert is the man he would like to see her marry, but the child doesn't like him—and shows her taste too! And as I am on this point, Mr. Mowbray, I may as well speak all I have to say openly. Mr.

Barillon found out that Muriel was attached to you, and when he heard that you were coming to Dartvennis he told her she must discourage you, and not renew the intimacy of the past."

A thrill of joy passed through the young man's heart. Muriel was then not indifferent to him, but only acting a part dictated to her by another! Her coldness was not due to want of affection, but to obedience to her father!

"I am so glad to hear that," said Kit, joyfully; "it has taken such a weight off my mind! When I met Miss Barillon at Dartvennis for the first time since those happy German days, I cannot tell you how miserable I felt to find her so cold and distant to me; for I love your niece, Miss Lysaght, as dearly as man ever loved woman."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Miss Lysaght, in tones of nervous agitation, "I'm very sorry to hear it—very sorry indeed! It is so sad to see the affections of two young people blighted in the bud; and I know the squire will never give his consent to his

daughter marrying any one who cannot make what he calls proper settlements. Really, what a miserable thing it was that you both ever met!"

"Not at all," said Kit gaily, and with the buoyant hope of youth; "I bless and canonise the very hour of our first acquaintance. I shall beg an interview with Mr. Barillon, and trust that matters will not turn out as hopeless as you imagine. Now that I know Miss Barillon is not indifferent to me, all else is as nothing."

"Oh, no; I know she likes you only too well," blurted out the simple Miss Lysaght; "but I am sure she would not do anything contrary to her father's wishes."

"Nor should I ask her," said Kit, proudly.

Just then the door opened, and in sailed Miss Pemberton, with her nephew in her wake.

"Well, I think I've made a goodish brew for you, Mowbray," said Dick. "I don't think you would get a better one even at the Rosicrucian."

"We have done our best to entertain

your highness," said Miss Pemberton, with a mock curtsey, to Kit, "and trust that you will be pleased not to criticise our modest hospitality too closely. Suppose we take a turn in the grounds? I am very proud of my garden. Are you fond of flowers? I am not quite so young as I used to be, Mr. Mowbray, so I must ask you to give me your arm!"

And a very pleasant time of it the young man had in that suburban retreat! Excellent was the dinner, choice was the Falernian, nectar was the cup, luxury itself the cigar on the lawn in the shadowy light of the eventide, and bright and kindly the attentions of the spinster hostess.

Ah, old maids! it is the fashion of a ribald world to mock at ye and put ye to shame, but never shall pen or word of mine assist the scoffer! Who of us, looking back upon the toils and sorrows of the life that is past, cannot recall some act of tenderness, some piece of noble devotion, some promptings of an unselfish affection that would have been lacking had not our derided sister-

hood of spinsters been by ? I ask any man not hopelessly a slave to accepted custom, to think what he owes to those aged vestals of his circle. True they may have eccentricity of character and dress which lay them open to satire, but are they not ever kindly, hospitable, and, in the most abiding sense of the word, loving ? In our boyhood they send us hampers and give us pocket money ; in our turbulent youth they pay our debts, and in our manhood their marriage gifts are ever the handsomest. Ah, kindliest of your order ! though Time furrows your brows and tints with snow your locks, there is youth ever in your generous impulses and unforgetting attentions. Your lips may be blanched and pinched, but they utter few words that need be recalled ; your hands may be veined and shrunken, but their grasp is ever honest and warm ; your figures may be bowed and your steps stiff and tottering, yet ye never tire in works of charity and love ! Blessings on ye, oh ! ancient of dames, and may your shadows never grow less. Why, because we admire the bloom of the summer flowerets should we withhold our tribute

from the russet leaves and the garlands of winter?

But it wanted not much to make my hero happy on this occasion. He was delighted with himself and all the world beside. Muriel loved him—yes, there could be no doubt about that now! A forced coldness had but veiled her love, and as he looked back within the chambers of his memory, the more he remembered her restraint and reserve, the more he felt sure of the depth and earnestness of her affection. He thought really of little else save what Miss Lysaght, kindly and not most discreet of damsels, had told him. Her conversation offered him food enough for sober reflection, but reaction only let him regard the future through the roseate hues of joy and hope. Muriel loved him! There was music, poetry, rapture in the thought, but no room for doubts and fears and forebodings. “She loves me,” he mused; “why should I fear? Fathers have refused before now and ended by consenting. Besides, who knows what may be in store for me in the future? Youth, love, and work battling for any object must win!

What *could* resist such a triumvirate?"  
And as he bade good night he whispered to  
Miss Lysaght—

"I shall plead my cause with the squire,  
and you will see that I shall be successful!"

She shook her head.

"Good night, my young friend! good  
night!" she said. "I wish still you had  
never met and I had never encouraged you!  
I have wished it for months past for Muriel's  
sake—I wish it now for *both* your sakes!  
Good night! good night!"





## CHAPTER II.

“ICH LIEBE UND BIN GELIEBT.”

HE next day, shortly after three o'clock, Kit wended his way from Whitehall to Wilton Crescent. Fortunately Miss Barillon was at home. He was ushered into the drawing-room, where he saw Muriel leaning over the shoulder of a dark, rather stout woman, who was writing at a davenport.

“How do you do, Mr. Mowbray?” said Muriel, coming forward with a most becoming flush on her pale fair face and shaking hands with the young man with all her wonted cordiality. “I am so glad to see you!” And then in a hasty whisper, she added, “I have been wondering whether you *would* call. Let me introduce you to my cousin, Mrs. Delamere.”

Kit bowed, and was soon occupied in talking and listening to conventional commonplaces. The two women, as they sat opposite to him, formed a charming contrast to each other. Mrs. Delamere was a brunette with magnificent eyes, regular features, and rich black hair, worn smooth in front and coiled tightly at the back of the head. She was dressed to perfection, her robe of neutral tints, displaying to the best advantage the undulations of a figure which, though inclined to *embonpoint*, was yet in complete harmony with her joyous, handsome face. Muriel, with her slight lissome figure, and the exquisite delicacy of her face and manner had little in common with the Cleopatra-like look of her friend, and perhaps a few would have thought she suffered by the comparison. But Kit was not amongst the number. He preferred his love with her soft auburn hair, her gentle liquid hazel eyes, and her clear complexion, a thousand times to all the royal charms of her splendid cousin. The dress, too, Muriel wore—a kind of tasso lace-trimmed over a brown silk kirtle full of

“wimpling rills”—became her wonderfully well and gave an additional charm to her graceful figure.

At the end of ten minutes of conventional morning-call twaddle, the door opened and the servant announced Mrs. Harcourt. Kit rose up from his seat.

“Oh, you musn’t go yet, Mr. Mowbray!” said Muriel: “I have seen nothing of you—I want to have a long chat with you; we have so much to talk about!” And she led the way into the inner room, Kit, nothing loth, following her. Mrs. Harcourt and Mrs. Delamere were soon so engrossed in discussing the rival merits of Madame Elise and Mrs. James, that Kit and Muriel were left perfectly undisturbed.

Almost unconsciously their conversation assumed something of the old tone of by-gone days, and in the manner in which Muriel asked after Kit’s doings since last they met, and spoke of the Dean and his family, there was a personal interest which bordered very closely upon affection. Kit made no allusion to her past coldness towards him, and was only too content to

bask in the present sunshine of his happiness. Before they parted they had agreed to meet the following day, when Mrs. Delamere was to drive them out. Nothing could be kinder than Muriel's cousin on this occasion. Having married Mr. Delamere, a wealthy timber merchant, whose ideas on all subjects were about as wooden as the nature of his trade, purely for his money, she took, like many women of her disposition, a keen interest in all love marriages. Muriel had spoken to her of this Mr. Mowbray quite often enough to let her into the secret of her feelings, whilst she saw at once that Kit reciprocated the attachment; accordingly, she determined to make a match of the affair. Of Kit she knew nothing but that he was in every way a gentleman, that he was very good-looking, and that he had a promising position in a crack Government office. Mrs. Delamere having done very well for herself, was very indignant, when Muriel spoke of her father's opposition, at any one being so cold as to regard marriage only from the practical banker's book point of view, and determined to ignore such

calculating behaviour. Unknown to Muriel she was always making little plans by which Kit was constantly at Wilton Crescent. One day he would be asked to dinner, or he would be driven out in the park, or he would be offered a seat in Mrs. Delamere's box at the opera, or he would be told to call and take a walk ; and what with one thing and another, not a day passed without Kit and Muriel meeting. To Muriel these interviews were so delicious, and away from her father she conjured up such bright dreams of his opposition being finally overcome, that she had not the strength to deny herself the pleasure of Kit's society. And as for the young man, he felt day by day more sure that Muriel returned his affection, and was indifferent to every other feeling. One afternoon, a fortnight after the renewal of their acquaintance, he called, as usual, at Wilton Crescent. Mrs. Delamere was engaged in talking to a visitor, and so Muriel and Kit were left together.

“ Have I ever shown you a sketch I made of Dartvennis cathedral ? ”

“ No, never.”

"Come into the other room, and I'll show it to you."

And the two walked into the inner room.

"How nice it is, you and I being good friends again!" said Muriel, smiling upon Kit as she placed a portfolio on the broad back of the grand piano. "Do you know, when I came up to town I never expected you to call on me?"

"Why did you not?"

"Because I thought you had quarrelled with me. Don't you remember how angry you seemed with me that night at Canon Boughton's?"

"Oh, I was not angry," said Kit, smiling, "but I felt hurt at you being so cold and distant to me when we had been such excellent friends before."

"Was I *very* cold? Yes, perhaps I was," and she looked grave for a moment. "Do you think the sketch like?" And she placed the drawing before him, whilst both leant over and examined it.

"Very like—from the north-east view, I think," said Kit. "I suppose you had a

reason for being so cold to me?" he asked in a low voice. It was the first time he had alluded to the subject.

"Must a woman have a reason for everything she does?" asked Muriel, smiling.

"No, for then she would cease to be a woman," said Kit; "but still I think you would not have snubbed me so at Dartvennis without some reason — why do you not snub me now?"

"Perhaps I should," said Muriel, quietly; "but you know it is the privilege of my sex to be variable. You like this sketch then?" and she pointed to the little water-colour picture that lay before them. "Where those black clouds are, you see I have put Royston in?"

"Oh, yes, I see! How well you have done the light struggling with the surrounding blackness—one quite realizes the idea of the vanquished clouds beating a retreat before the vivid force of the light."

"That was my intention—light should always be victorious, you know," said Muriel, bending over her sketch.

“Should it?” said Kit. “Let it then be a happy omen to me!”

“A happy omen! what do you mean?” said Muriel, turning her face towards him with a puzzled look.

“That I love you dearly, deeply! have loved you from almost the first hour when we met!” said Kit in a low voice, and placing his hand on that of Muriel, busy with the sketch. “The old pagans used to say that love was light, and all-conquering. Your love is the only light I wish to illumine my existence—grant it me, my dear Muriel, and the surrounding clouds must be dispelled. Your father is averse to my attachment for you, I know, but I would fain hope should he find our affection for each other mutual that he will not be relentless. Light must be victorious, you know, said Kit, smiling. “You said it yourself. Do you love me?”

She did not reply for a moment, but her hand still rested beneath the touch of his, nor did she attempt to withdraw it. Then in a soft murmuring whisper, she said, “How did you know that papa was averse

to our becoming attached? You see I say *our* becoming attached!" and she looked up into Kit's face smilingly, and her hand returned the pressure of his grasp.

"I met Miss Lysaght a few days ago, at Norwood. I found out accidentally that she was staying with the aunt of a friend of mine, and I spoke to her of my attachment for you," said Kit, giving only a partial version of what that indiscreet lady had said. Muriel would hardly have cared to hear that her lover had been told of her affection from other lips than her own.

"And what did Aunt Maria say?" asked Muriel.

"She was not very encouraging," laughed Kit. "She said that your father would object—that I was not rich enough, and that it was very sad we had ever met. But faint heart ne'er won fair damsel, and I am not the only man in the world who has had to fight against a father's opposition!" said Kit, gaily. "What wouldn't I go through to win you, my darling! How hard Mrs. Delamere is looking at us!" said Kit.

“Oh, never mind,” said Muriel, looking up, and giving an expressive smile to her cousin, “she knows all about it.”

“It?—about what?” asked Kit.

“Dass Ich liebe dich!” said Muriel, placing both her hands upon Kit’s, and looking him in the face with her soft dreamy eyes. “How I used to repreach myself for being so cold and distant to you when I knew that you were true and loving to me! How heartless you must have thought me! And yet I was not heartless—all the time I pretended to be indifferent to you, I was not; but papa told me that I was not to encourage you, and that he would not sanction the idea of our union, so of course it was only right to be apparently cold and distant.”

“You say *was* only right; then now, my darling, there is no occasion for that coldness? Your father is not so inexorable?”

“Oh, no; I did not mean that—would that it were so!” said Muriel, smiling sadly. “My father, I fear—and yet sometimes I hope the contrary—is as opposed to an engagement between us as he ever was.

The fault—if fault there be—is mine. I cannot do as papa wishes,” added she, petulantly. “I tried to be brave and dutiful, and never to think of you, but I cannot now,” said she, putting her hand in his, “it is beyond me! Since I have known Rosa I have heard so much about you, and all that I have heard has been so much in your favour, that the love I felt for you ever since those dear German days seemed to come back upon me with a double force, and refused to be frozen, though obedience to my father required it. Perhaps, too,” she smiled, “human nature was at work, and I loved you all the more because I was forbidden. I feared you had quarrelled with me—hated me for being a coquette—as I hated myself, and that you would not speak to me again. But my heart told me that if you felt towards me as of old, I could not repel you again, for I have found,” and she bent her head down, “that my love for you is stronger than obedience to a harsh duty. If the possession of my love be worth the winning, you have won it—Kit,” and an arch smile lit up her eyes as she

mentioned for the first time his Christian name.

“Oh my darling—how happy you make me feel!” murmured Kit. “What do I care for opposition? Opposition was only made to be defeated. We will plead the old old cause together, and the most relentless parent would never have the heart to resist our prayer, much less the squire, who looks kindness itself.”

“Oh, dear papa! I am sure he means for the best, but he is so desirous of my marrying a rich man! What do I care for wealth?

The glories of our wealth and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things,

says the poet. And how shadowy they must be where happiness is not. Oh, how I pray and hope that papa will come to look at the matter from our point of view,” sighed Muriel, regarding her lover tenderly. “How awful it will be if he rejects you and bids me never see you more! I feel such a mixture of happiness and forebodings! Come into the conservatory, and I will give you a flower!”

Kit remained till afternoon tea, and Mrs. Delamere was duly informed of the matter. She was charmed.

"Oh, of course Uncle Geoffrey," said she in that easy joyous way with which women of her build and disposition regard all difficulties, "will give his consent,—if he refuses he must be brought to give his consent. Besides, it is not as if you had *nothing*, Mr. Mowbray—your prospects are exceedingly good! And Lord Salamis is sure to advance you—especially when he hears of your being attached to Muriel. What a pretty picture you two make," she laughed, "much too gushing to be so soon separated! Fortunately we are alone this evening, so, of course, you will dine with us?"

Kit readily accepted the invitation, and considering the state of his heart, played an excellent knife and fork. Mr. Delamere was good enough to go to sleep after playing two games of *ecarté*, whilst Mrs. Delamere found it necessary to write some letters in her boudoir. Thus Kit and Muriel were left charmingly undisturbed.

When the two parted it was decided that Kit should visit Royston at once, and inform the squire of his proposal.

"How much depends on papa's answer!" said Muriel, bidding her lover adieu. "The happiness of both of us! Let us pray that it may be favourable. Did Rosa tell you about Mr. Lambert? Yes. Papa, I know, was disappointed at my refusing him, and I fancy still encourages him to persevere in his suit. But when he sees that my heart is so entirely yours, I hope he will withdraw his opposition." And as both Kit and Muriel were resolved to make the squire the arbiter of their fate, the two thought it better not to meet again till Mr. Barillon had expressed his views upon the subject.

"I shall write at once to papa," said Muriel.

"And I shall get leave from Lord Salamis for a day or two, and hasten down to Dartvennis," said Kit. And they parted.

Two days afterwards Kit was walking up the beechwood avenue which led to Royston. From the windows of his library

the squire saw him approach, and watched him narrowly as he made his way to the house. "I don't wonder at Muriel losing her heart to him," he muttered, "for he's comely enough! I wish Lambert were more like him. But that Muriel is to engage herself—absurd! He hasn't a farthing! Both of them can do much better with themselves, and *must* do better. For poverty to mate with poverty is like cancer marrying consumption. I wish I had never sent her to town!" He was interrupted in his musings by the servant, opening the door and saying, "Mr. Mowbray, sir!"

"Show him in here," said the squire. Kit, feeling rather nervous and somewhat shy, was ushered into the library. The squire, with genial smile and extended hand, received him most cordially.

"I think I know the nature of your visit," said he, smiling. "Sit down. You have had a good deal of rain in London lately I hear?"

"For the last few days. Miss Barillon has written to you I suppose concerning—" began Kit.

“Yes, Muriel wrote to me,” said the squire. “I only received the letter this morning, else I would have sent you a line bidding you to spare yourself the trouble of coming down.”

“Then may I not hope that your consent will be granted?” asked Kit, anxiously.

“Do you think, my young friend, that in justice to my daughter I *can* give my consent?” said the squire, gravely. “When I tell you that I cannot permit such an engagement to take place, you must not think my refusal as in any way personal to yourself; on the contrary, what I know of you, and what I have heard of you, strongly recommend you to me. But, Mr. Mowbray, marriage is not merely a question of liking or disliking; other matters enter into the subject—money, for instance.” And the squire looked at Kit a little hardly.

“Of course,” said Kit. “I fully understand and appreciate the drift of your remark. Should you give your consent, neither Miss Barillon nor I have any intention of marrying at once. We should wait until I felt justified in taking such a step.”

“And when would you feel justified?”

“When I was in possession of an income on which I could offer a home with comfort, and a life without anxiety to her who would be my wife.”

“And what would you consider as the amount of such income?” asked the squire, in rather a bantering voice.

“Money has after all only a relative value,” said Kit. “Of course to any one who could only be satisfied with every luxury and dissipation of society, the sum on which we should be content to marry would indeed be ridiculous. But to two people whose tastes are modest and views of life not ambitious, a marriage that begins—say on a thousand a year, need not be, from pecuniary reasons, an unhappy one.”

“Then you would propose to marry on a thousand a year? That is not much in London. But still, when would you be in possession of this thousand a year?” continued the squire, still in his slightly bantering voice. Kit was so in earnest that he did not detect its tone.

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied Kit; “I

have been very fortunate as yet, and with Lord Salamis' interest—I am sure he would befriend me—I hope I should not have to wait unreasonably long.”

“You hope? Then we are only dealing with the future as yet, Mr. Mowbray?” asked the squire, lifting his eyebrows.

“Oh, yes; only with the future; but——”

“Young lovers are content with the future; it seems so near and looks so bright. Fathers regard the present, or else are only content with a *certain* future. Your present, I may perhaps be forgiven for saying, is not very brilliant from a father-in-law's point of view, nor is your future likely to be much more brilliant. No, my young friend;” said the squire, rising from his chair and placing his hand kindly on Kit's shoulder, “it will not do. I must give a decided no to your offer. I have—can you blame me?—higher views for my daughter. You may think me rich, and that it would be in my power to give Muriel a handsome portion, but I tell you candidly it would not be so in my power. My daughter is not the heiress you may

imagine, and I wish her therefore to marry one who could let her live in the manner in which she has been accustomed. It is true that she is simple and domestic in her tastes, and devoid of ambition, and that she would be happy on much less than many other girls in her position in life, but still, I, as her father, must act as I think best for her interests. Even if you had now your thousand a year I should say no to your offer."

"Then I am to consider it perfectly hopeless ever dreaming of your daughter's hand?" said Kit, sadly.

"Perfectly hopeless, Mr. Mowbray," said the squire gravely, but not unkindly, "perfectly hopeless; and it is right you should know at once that such is the case, in order not to indulge in any dreams which can never be realized. I sincerely regret that any verdict of mine should cause both of you, as I fear it will, unhappiness; but my duty lies clear before me to say no to your offer. Muriel is to blame in having encouraged you."

"It *will* cause unhappiness to both of us,"

said Kit, rising. “Of my unhappiness I shall say nothing ; but, Mr. Barillon—and believe me, I say it now with no feeling of pride, but in the sternest sorrow—your daughter loves me, and your refusal to our union will, I am afraid, go hard with her.”

“That both of you must feel unhappy at my answer is to be expected ; but youth is elastic, and not given to grow morbid. Let us trust,” said the squire, smiling, “to its buoyancy.”

“You may trust to what you like, Mr. Barillon,” said Kit, sadly, “but one thing I am sure of—that if you expect either of us to forget the other you are grievously mistaken.”

“Oh, I hope not,—I hope not,” said the squire. Then, after a pause, he continued, smiling kindly, “And now, Mr. Mowbray, I am sure you will act in this matter as a gentleman?”

Kit rose up to his full height, and looked at the squire somewhat haughtily. “Pray, Mr. Barillon, what do you mean?” said he.

"Both of you have appealed to me in the affair, and have consented to abide by my answer. Why such an appeal has been made I know not, for Muriel must have been aware of the reply I should give to it. But now, Mr. Mowbray, that my answer has been in the negative, you, as a man of honour, must see that——"

"There should be an end of my acquaintance with Miss Barillon," said Kit, haughtily. "Rest assured, sir, that I shall not seek to renew any intimacy with your daughter till I have your full permission to do so. Should we by accident meet, either at Dartvennis or in town, we must meet as strangers. Still," continued he, smiling a little sadly, "I shall flatter myself with the hope that on the reconsideration of your answer at some future date you will be pleased to relent."

"If you mean by relenting giving my consent, your hopes are idle," said the squire, gravely. "Thanks for your saying that you will not seek interviews with Muriel. I knew you would act as a gentleman. I shall write to her telling her I have

seen you, and what has been the nature of my answer."

"Perhaps you would permit me also to write? I shall not call at Wilton Crescent on my return to town, and I should like Miss Barillon to hear from me also of what you have said. I will write a line here, and you can enclose it in your own."

"Oh, certainly."

Kit sat down and wrote as follows:—

"I am writing this letter in your father's study after my interview with him. It is impossible to tell you with what pain I have heard his refusal to all idea of our union. On that point, I mourn to say, he seems so decided that the only course open for *me* to pursue is at once to abide by his wishes. He desires that henceforth you and I meet as strangers, and it now rests with *you* to see if it be in your power to alter his decision. That I earnestly hope you may be more successful in your pleading than I have been, I think I need hardly say. With you the whole happiness of my life seems so bound up that I cannot look the future in the face

and believe that your father's decision is to remain for ever unalterable. Fain would I still hope that in your hands *our* cause may yet prosper. God grant that it may ! I cannot think that such love as ours should have been permitted to spring up for misery and not for happiness. Light must conquer ! I await your triumph, but till then must be content to wait and hope.

“C. MOWBRAY.”

“Would you like to read this ?” said Kit, handing his letter to the squire.

“No, no, seal it up,” said the squire, smiling. “I am sure you would not write anything to my daughter to which I should object. And now,” added he, coming up to Kit and laying his hand on his shoulder, “if I cannot be your father-in-law I can at least be your host. Come in to luncheon. No, no ; I will not take a refusal.” And the squire, linking his arm within that of Kit’s, led the way into the dining-room.

After luncheon the two parted. The squire had been as was his wont most kind and genial during the whole visit ; had

asked Kit about his office ; had wished to know whether he could do anything in his favour by writing to Lord Salamis ; had questioned him as to how he liked London, &c., but of course had never once alluded to Muriel. As Kit shook hands with him in the hall the young man said—

“Good-bye, Mr. Barillon ; I shall still hope on !”

“I pray you do not be so foolish,” replied the squire, gravely ; “hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and I have no wish that yours should sicken. You know my answer. Believe me I *never* can return any other—good-bye !”

Kit walked back to Dartvennis. The afternoon was one Constable would have liked to transfer to his canvas. Heavy black clouds swept the sky and lowered ominously over the bright verdure of the downs. A keen breeze whistled through the thickly foliaged trees and bowed before its breath the willows by the stream and the rich long grass which buried the grazing kine to their hocks. In the distant horizon there was a broad band of vivid light, which

came out in bold relief to the surrounding leaden-hued clouds and made the plain and dale beneath bright with a silvery glitter. The cattle were herding together in picturesque groups and sniffing the air as if expectant of the coming storm. The sheep had left the open of the meadows and were flocking beneath the kindly circle of neighbouring oaks and elms. Here and there a plunging horse, lashed into exercise by the biting wind, dashed madly about within his paddock. The whole country was enveloped in that clear cold light which makes the most distant object near and which is always a sure presage of rain.

“I wish I had taken the dogcart,” said Kit, looking around, “it will be no joke being caught in this storm! Well, I must put the pace on, that’s all!” and suiting the action to the word he walked briskly forward. His thoughts were naturally full of the result of his visit. Disappointment at the squire’s decided refusal he keenly felt. He had never been over-sanguine as to an immediate success, for he knew that Mr. Barillon, as a man of the world, would naturally have

higher views for his daughter than for her to marry a man who was dependent on his own exertions for his living, and who could not settle what a rich man or the son of a rich man could. But still he had hoped that the squire would have given, when he saw that his daughter was really in love, an answer more encouraging than the one he had returned. He had hoped that Mr. Barillon might have asked time for consideration, or have said that in a year or two hence if they were then of the same opinion he would seriously think of the matter, or might have given some answer which would have been if not hopeful at least not hopeless. But such had not been the case. The squire had treated Kit's proposal very kindly and had behaved throughout as if it was really utterly impossible to treat the matter seriously. It was evident to the young man that Mr. Barillon regarded the whole affair as a piece of sentimental romance, which if discouraged would soon vanish on the part of both the lovers. But though the squire had treated Kit's offer with his usual geniality he had not been one whit the less firm—decidedly

and unmistakably Mowbray felt he was refused, and that as far as he was directly concerned he could do nothing. The matter must be left in Muriel's hands. It was for her now to use all her charms and wiles to conquer her father's opposition and to pave the way for their future union.

"I know she loves me," mused he, as the spires of Dartvennis cathedral rose in sight; "and I shall trust her advocacy. The squire is not the only father who has begun by refusing and ended by relenting. I wish he had given me some sort of encouragement though, so that Muriel and I might both together make war against his decision! Perhaps it is just as well as it is though—these matters are much better managed in the hands of a woman, and in all probability I should only do our cause harm. We both have the fullest trust in each other, thank heaven! and when there is that mutual confidence lovers are thrice armed. Oh, we must win!" And cheering himself with the hope that springs eternally he walked on, feeling his disappointment

less and less as he thought more and more of Muriel's advocacy.

As he neared Dartvennis the long pent up storm burst forth, and a driving rain poured down, which soon laid flat the tall grass of the meadows, and stirred up the clay and marl of the swollen stream. Fortunately a shed belonging to a roadside inn stood near at hand, and Kit was soon beneath the protection of its thatched roof.

“Pelting now, sir, with a vengeance!” said a man who had also taken shelter, pointing with his left hand to the face of nature so enveloped in the sheeted rain that it seemed as if the country were under a glass case.

“It is, indeed! I consider myself lucky to have got into such a shed,” said Kit, regarding the stranger. He was a tall thin man in a seedy black frock coat, trousers very much the worse for wear, and boots that wanted only one bulge more to burst completely. A white hat with a mourning band round it was rammed over the back of his head; a rusty black stock enveloped his

collarless neck, whilst its folds in front did duty for linen ; altogether his appearance did not look exactly like prosperity. His face was thin and gaunt, the eyes bleared as if with drink and late hours, the cheeks livid and hollow, but yet there was something in the tone of the man's voice and in his demeanour which betokened better days.

“ Beg your pardon, sir,” said the man, touching his hat, “ but I think you are Mr. Mowbray ?”

“ Yes,” said Kit. There was nothing extraordinary in the question—the son of the Dean was no stranger in Dartvennis or its neighbourhood.

“ I thought I knew you, sir,” continued the man, with a self-seeking smile on his face. “ I told old Kontangopadatta that you weren't the man as had the bill out against him, but he would have his own way.”

“ What do you know of Mr. Kontangopadatta ?” asked Kit, a little haughtily.

“ What do I know of him ?” repeated the man. “ Well, I think I ought to know him

pretty well, considering I have been in his service for the last two years. He don't take long to know, the sweep!” added the man, contemptuously.

“Oh, yes, I think I remember you now,” said Kit, looking at the stranger keenly; “you are the man who opened the door of his brougham the day he called on me.”

“Yes I was, sir. I saw you thrash him too, through the window, and right glad I was to see it. He soon found out that I knew all about his being licked, 'cos I went about town telling everybody. I made no secret of it, and he gave me the sack.”

“What did you have to do in his service?” asked Kit.

“Oh, the usual thing, sir. Find out all about his clients, who they were, what were their prospects, and when it was time they paid up. I knew that you weren't the C. Mowbray in the bill; but old Kontango-padatta would have it that you were. Well, I'm glad I've left him, that's all! By the way, sir, would you be of assistance to me? I take in the *Censor*, and I see your name pretty often in the paper; would you mind

recommending me as penny-a-liner, or to do occasional or sporting paragraphs? The business isn't new to me—I'm a liner now for three of the daily papers, and I do the pigeon shooting, cricketing, and racquets for the *Rusinurbe Gazette*. I should take it kindly if you would recommend me, sir."

After a little more conversation with the man, who gave the name of Dawson, Kit said he had no objection to mention him to the sub-editor of the *Censor*, and to see if it was in his power to help him; the fellow looked so miserable and the favour asked was so trifling that Kit had not the heart to refuse. Accordingly, he put Dawson's name and address down in his memorandum book; and, as the shower had now ceased, prepared to walk homewards.

"I suppose all the land about here belongs to Squire Barillon?" asked Kit.

"Yes, sir. His property extends to the brow of the West Hill of Dartvennis—a fine property is Royston, a fine property! Ah me! would to God I never had anything to do with it!" said the man, more to himself than to his listener.

“Why, what had you to do with it?” asked Kit.

“Did I say I had anything to do with it?” said the man, sharply.

“Yes.”

“Oh, I meant nothing—nothing at all, sir! I sometimes think nonsense, and out it comes before I am aware that my lips are moving. The storm is now cleared off and I must be stepping. Good day, sir. You won’t forget your promise to recommend me? Many thanks. Good day, sir.” And the man walked off.

Kit a few minutes afterwards followed his example, and another half-hour saw him at the Deanery, making his sister Rosa the confidante of his interview with the Squire.





## CHAPTER III.

### RIESENHEIM AGAIN.

**R**For all the hotels which minister to the wants of the stranger sojourning for health or pleasure at the now famous capital of the Grand Duchy of Seltzer-Wasserbrunnen recommend me to the Stephanie. Its situation commands all the beauties of the place; its grounds are laid out with charming taste, its cuisine is perfect, its waiters are the most obedient and attentive of their order, and from cooking to charges there is absolutely nothing to complain of. But perhaps its chief attraction is the breakfast garden, where beneath elm and Scotch fir, spreading sycamore and golden laburnum, spotless round tables are laid at discreet and picturesque intervals for the enjoyment of *déjeuners à la*

*fourchette*. Frühstück is a great meal (the Teutons, as a rule, are good trencher-men all round) at the Stephanie, and from July to the end of September the breakfast-garden is crowded with beauties from London and Paris, Vienna and Berlin, New York and Madrid, who in the most airy of costumes and the strangest of hats, eat, drink, and are merry from their potage to their coffee. Chatter and laughter, scandal and criticism are heard on every side, and the sourest cynic cannot, in spite of himself, help feeling genial and gay. If cheerfulness at meals be the best cure for indigestion, go, my dyspeptic friend, to the velvet lawn of the Stephanie, where beneath its heavy-foliaged trees, and within pleasant eye-shot of international beauties *atra cura* soon will be dispelled, and side dishes enjoyed which would be positive death in town. A month at Riesenheim is worth a couple of years' Revalenta.

Seated alone at one of these tables one brilliant morning at the end of August, was a very pretty woman. Her silky blond hair, her large, deep blue eyes, fringed with

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deep black lashes, and her delicate complexion, combined with her peculiar pronunciation of the German language, proclaimed her at once to be a fair daughter of Albion—one of *ces dames Anglaises*, who so excite the admiration and astonishment of susceptible Parisians. Though stately beauties from St. Petersburg, dark-eyed Señoras from Madrid, coquettish dames from Paris, and most wonderfully dressed fashionables from the States, were all assembled at their respective tables, yet the fair English woman was the centre of attraction. Conscious as every woman is of the admiration she creates, she seemed however to take all this homage as a mere matter of course, and a tribute which habit had rendered commonplace. She was charmingly dressed in pearl grey, lit up at becoming intervals with a green *à pomme verte*, whilst ribbons of the same hue flowed from her waist, and from her coquettish little Louis Quatorze hat. It was evident that she was in an expectant mood, for the table was laid for two, and as she picked away at the strawberries in front of her with her white

jewelled hand, she kept constantly looking round in the direction of the hotel. A pretty pout was on her mouth, and there was a little look of irritability in her large soft eyes, such as a spoilt child might wear, as she endeavoured to conceal her impatience. Who was the callous person who could make such a pretty woman wait? more than one admiring observer asked. The question was however soon answered. Threading his way through the trees, was a tall elderly man, considerably bronzed, whose heavy moustache and imperial gave him a stern, military look. He approached the table.

“ Well, Helen !” said he, smiling, “ I hope I have not quite exhausted your patience !”

“ What a time you have been, Sir George !” said she, pettishly. “ You have kept me waiting at least a quarter of an hour !”

“ Have I really, my darling; have I really ?” said he, still smiling. “ Louis XIV. couldn’t have expressed his indignation better—*garçon, déjeuner !*”

“ What made you so late ?” asked she,

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imperiously. “I am horribly jealous, with all these women about the place! Where have you been? What have you been doing? That’s the worst of marrying men who have led *une vie orageuse*—one never knows how far to trust them!”

“What do you know about men and their *vies orageuses*, Helen?” asked Sir George, quietly, whilst unfolding his napkin.

“Oh, I have read about them!” said she, sharply. “I am not so easily to be deceived as you may imagine!”

“Never believe anything you read, my pet, and it is astonishing how little you will have to unlearn when you are some years older,” said Sir George, nibbling away at the radishes.

“Oh, reading! never mind about reading; I had enough to do with that once upon a time. But where have you been this morning? You haven’t answered my question,” asked the lady, feverishly.

“But, my poppet, am I bound to answer all your questions?” said Sir George, a humorous look playing around his lips.

"No, you wont answer because you *can't* answer!" said the lady, working herself up into a passion. "You have been flirting with that tall woman who calls herself a Russian princess—I know you have! I saw the way you looked at her at the Wells! Oh, don't think you deceive me, Sir George Barillon! Act as your wicked nature suggests, but don't think for a moment that I am ignorant of your infamous conduct! Infamous I say, in a man of your age, who has only quite lately married a woman whom he vowed to love and cherish! And in my condition too!"

"My darling," said Sir George, very quietly, and pouring out a tumbler of Macon, "I only went to the post to get the English letters. There are two for you, from Bath I think, and one to me from Royston. Here comes the soup, so look smiling, Helen! What must people think of your getting so excited about nothing?"

"But why didn't you tell me where you had been to, George?" said the lady softly, and breaking out into smiles. "You

know I am only jealous of you because I love you so."

"Then I should like a little less love, and a little more peace, my dear," said Sir George, rather sternly. "Oh, *filets de bœuf aux olives*—they do those very well here! Can I help you?"

"Oh! now you are angry with me, George," said the lady, pouting. "No, I wont have any soup or anything else till you say you forgive me. I wont do it again, George!" she added, pleadingly.

"Very well, my pet—very well. I forgive you," said he, smiling. "Who are your letters from?"

"From papa. I wish you would turn your chair a *little* more to the left, George—so as to prevent that little Frenchwoman looking at you—there, she's eyeing you now! they are such odious creatures, these Frenchwomen! Do, *do* what I ask you, George," concluded she, with some asperity.

"Going to begin again, Helen, eh?" asked Sir George, a little crossly. "I don't know the woman from Eve, or anything about her."

“*Then* dear I am sure you needn’t mind turning your chair as I ask you!” And Sir George, being a sensible husband, and knowing that women should have their way in little things, placed his chair in the desired position.

Occasionally, I fear, Sir George Barillon repented him somewhat of his married lot, and regretted the ease and liberty of the South Pacific. As Governor of the Cochinseal Islands he had led a life of complete freedom from most of the restraints of European existence, and being a man—to put it kindly—of not a very strict way of thinking, it had suited him exactly. One fine day, as luck would have it, however, an English yacht anchored off the Islands. Its owner, a Mr. Sitwell, a well-known member of the Squadron and the “Western,” brought letters of introduction to the Governor, and was at once asked up to Government House, where the most profuse hospitality invariably reigned. The yachting party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Sitwell, and their distant cousin, a Miss Lorrimer, the daughter of a poor half-pay captain living at Bath, and

who served for the time as a kind of companion to Mrs. Sitwell.

And thus it came to pass that it was not long before Sir George, always susceptible as regards the fair sex, became very much smitten with the beauty of Miss Lorrimer. Mrs. Sitwell, prudent dame that she was, thought it accordingly only right to her cousin to defer their cruise to New Zealand for a little. It was a good chance and one not to be thrown away. At first, however, there was a little resistance. Miss Lorrimer had no strong liking for becoming, in the heyday of her youth and beauty, that *pis aller* an old man's darling—"and such a man too, Edith!" said she, reproachfully, to Mrs. Sitwell, "I hear he is very, *very* wicked!" "That's because he is not married—marry him and reform him, Helen," said Mrs. Sitwell, who like many women looked upon matrimony as the one only sovereign cure for the vicious and unstable. "No, it is too grave a responsibility," replied Helen. "Well, as you like," answered Mrs. Sitwell; "I can only say you are very foolish—you have an opportunity offered you of being

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comfortably settled as the wife of a man who holds a high colonial post, who is a K.C.B., and who besides is a man of as good family as is to be found in England—and you refuse it! Pray what is the alternative open to you that you should be so particular? Unless you get married—and look at the number of pretty girls nowadays unmarried!—I see nothing for you but to be again what you were a year ago—a governess.” “Oh, anything but that hated life; I will see about it, Edith,” said Helen.

And the consequence was, that a month after this conversation, Sir George proposed to Miss Lorrimer, and shortly afterwards she became Lady Barillon. Oddly enough, at least so it seemed to Lady Barillon, she ended by falling deeply in love with her husband, and became as jealous of him as if he were Prince Prettyman himself, shortly after their marriage. Sir George did everything in his power to foster her love, and nothing to excite her jealousy, and thus it was not long before his pretty wife assumed a complete mastery over him. As the result of this assumption of authority Lady Barillon suc-

ceeded, a year after their union, in making him resign his governorship and return to England on his pension. "Better, George dear," said she, "a thousand a year in England than three out in this place. Besides, it will keep you out of harm's way. You have been a Bohemian so long that it is very desirable *now* that you should be again subject to civilization." There were certain ladies in the island whose wiles the jealous Lady Barillon, I need hardly say, was much in dread of.

Sir George accordingly returned to England, where his wife shortly afterwards fell into that situation for which the waters of Riesenheim are, I am given to understand, so excellent. Had it not been for Lady Barillon's jealousy Sir George would have had not much to complain of; but the green-eyed monster was ever cropping up, and always without the slightest provocation. "It's a judgment on me," sighed the husband, as he thought of his past life. Still he adored his wife and spoilt her, petted her, and encouraged her as only an old man can who marries a young and pretty woman.

"Who is your letter from, do you say?"

asked Lady Barillon, as the two were finishing their breakfast.

“From Geoffrey; he says he has been troubled with the gout, and intends to try the waters here in preference to Buxton. He talks of coming about the middle of next month. I am sorry to hear him say that Muriel also is not very well.”

“Oh, I am sorry too,” said Lady Barillon. “How do you like my dress, George? It’s the one you got me from Laferrière—the first time I have ever had it on.”

“Very pretty, indeed,” said Sir George; “suits you to perfection—that shade of new green is very becoming.”

“I am *so* glad you like it; now don’t make *beaux yeux* at that abominable French-woman over there, you naughty man!”

“*Beaux yeux*, indeed! I am afraid I am going to be troubled with my old ophthalmia again—my eyes felt very prickly this morning.”

“Retribution, Sir George, retribution!” said his wife, gravely. “Eyes that have done so much damage in their time must of course be made to suffer at last!”

“ Well, since they have been permitted to see you, my darling, I shall not complain of them,” said the old man, kindly. “ And so Geoffrey is coming here! I shall be glad to see him again. You won’t be jealous of Muriel, will you, Helen? She is a great favourite of mine.”

“ I am jealous of *everybody*,” answered Lady Barillon, “ in the shape of a woman when she talks to you; besides, I think we have good reason to be jealous of those Royston Barillons. What could your brother mean by leaving the place away from you?”

“ Well, it *was* a shame,” said Sir George, “ but I was then abroad and very comfortable, and the blow didn’t fall very heavily upon me. Now that I am married, and got you, poppet, to care for, I must say I should like to see you the *châtelaine* of Royston.”

“ No chance of that, I suppose?” inquired Lady Barillon, listlessly, whilst buttoning a pale kid glove.

“ Not the slightest,” said her husband. “ Why, how could there be with Arthur

Barillon in the way? Besides, even if he dies without children the place is entailed on Muriel and her heirs for ever. My brother took very good care not to leave me a loophole of a chance! Da——”

“Hush! Why did he hate you so? It was very wrong. Do you think my hat goes well with this dress?” Sir George nodded approval. “Do you know,” continued his spouse, “I think you were very foolish to let yourself be ousted from Royston.”

“Perhaps I was, but it’s no use now crying over spilt milk. It is hard though to see the home of one’s fathers in the hands of another.” And Sir George sighed reflectively.

“I don’t think Mr. Barillon should have taken the property—a man with a nice sense of honour would not have done so,” said Lady Barillon. “If that Frenchwoman looks round here again I shall make faces at her!”

“Pray don’t, unless you wish to be regarded as mad as my brother Dick. But about Geoffrey! Oh, no one can breathe a

word against him ! He acted throughout like a perfect gentleman.”

“ Then why didn’t he hand over the place to you ? He knew that you were the lawful owner of Royston, and that it was only owing to the insanity of your brother that you were excluded from the will ! Oh, a perfect gentleman would never have consented to see himself enriched by such means—it’s like robbery !”

“ But Geoffrey couldn’t help himself. According to the nature of the will, and owing to various bequests it contained, it was not in his power to upset it. I thought at one time of bringing the matter before the Probate Court on the ground of the testator’s insanity, but it wouldn’t have been a pleasant inquiry for me to have originated ; besides, I was very happy then out in those islands. Don’t frown, my pet ! the past is for ever past, and I am quite a reformed character ! Shall we go out for a stroll ?”

Lady Barillon nodded assent, and the two were soon walking through the breakfast-garden to reach its northern end, which

abuts on to the promenade leading up to the Conversations Haus. As Sir George was opening the little wooden gate for his wife to pass through into the road, an elderly man, supporting on his arm an invalid, who tottered along with feeble steps and head bent low, crossed their path. Whether it was by accident or from hearing the gate slam, the invalid looked up and met the gaze of Sir George. It was our old acquaintance Hawtrey, who was slowly recovering his senses, and taking his morning constitutional on the arm of the kindly Dr. Stüttmacher. He still looked very pale and ill and shrunken, whilst the vacant expression in his eyes certainly did not tend to improve his appearance. Altogether he was a ghastly object.

The sight of Sir George appeared to affect him strangely. His face grew paler even than its wonted hue, his frame shook in every limb, and the filmed eyes seemed battling with memory. He stood still and stared at Sir George.

“What an awful object!” muttered Lady Barillon. “Come along, George.” And Sir

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George, mindful of his spouse, with proper marital anxiety, hastened away in an opposite direction.

“What a frightful face!” said Lady Barillon, nervously; “it quite haunts me! Suppose I should—Oh, dreadful! The awful man!” And she hurried on.

“I have seen a ghost, Doctor,” said Hawtrey, solemnly, and still standing motionless; “I never thought to see *him* again! Perhaps he’s come to judge me! Oh, how shall I escape him? Take me back, Doctor; take me back! I shall feel safe when at the house again.”

“What nonsense,” said Doctor Stüttmacher, laughing; “as if there were such things as ghosts! And even if there were, would they come out on a bright morning? Nonsense, my friend; let us continue our walk.”

“No, no; I wish to return! Are you in league with him? Then take me back! See! he’s coming to me!”

“Hush, hush! I will take you back. He’s not coming to you. Don’t you see that he is going just in the opposite direc-

tion?" And linking the arm of Hawtrey again in his own, the Doctor slowly returned to the asylum.

"*His* ghost," muttered Hawtrey, as he suffered himself to be led, "his ghost! What will he do with me when he gets me? Ah, I wish I knew what it was I did years ago! but I forget—forget!—it's all blank here!" and he tapped his forehead. "Poor head! poor head!" And he relapsed into a dead silence, from which all the wiles of the Doctor failed to extricate him.

It was quite true, as Sir George had told his wife, that Mr. Barillon intended to pay Riesenheim a visit. His old enemy, the gout, after an interval which rendered the attack all the more unpleasant and unbearable, was beginning again to trouble our friend at Royston. He had accordingly come up to town for advice, and was most strenuously ordered the waters of Riesen-heim in preference to those at Buxton. The advice was not very disagreeable for the Squire to follow, for he thought change would do him good, and perhaps be also beneficial to his daughter.

Muriel had not been looking well lately, and her father found to his annoyance that Mr. Mowbray was the cause of her altered appearance. Nothing seemed to cheer her ; she had lost her freshness and vivacity ; at times she looked almost plain. The doctor said she wanted tone, but the Squire knew better, and that she wanted Kit Mowbray ! But Mr. Barillon felt that it was his duty, in spite of all, not to suffer such a match to take place, and that if it was to be a choice of two evils, it was better that Muriel should mope a little now rather than be miserable hereafter. The Squire had quite made up his mind that misery and Kit Mowbray inevitably went together. He hoped, however, that his daughter's usual good sense would return to her, and that she would soon see the folly of being in love with a penniless young man, and end by looking upon matters from her father's point of view.

“ Let her brood on,” he mused, “ perfectly undisturbed by me, and the affair will die a natural death. I am glad I told Lambert all about it ; he takes it

very sensibly. As he says, it's not now the time to pursue his suit, but after a bit, when time has healed the wound, then he thinks there will be a chance of success. I shouldn't wonder if he's right—a disappointed girl is always easily won. Not that I wish Muriel to be unhappy simply to please me—far from it! But would she be unhappy if she married Lambert? I don't think so: he's not my idea exactly, but it doesn't do to be too particular. And then she'll always have, if she should be unhappy—and gad, why *should* she be unhappy? one can't have everything in the world!—she'll always have, I say, the advantages that a good fortune for herself and children can offer. That's something at all events. If a woman marries a rich man, and she finds matrimony a mistake, she can always fall back upon the money arrangements; whereas, if a girl marries a poor man, what the deuce has she to fall back upon? Nothing but a crowded nursery and under-paid servants! Gad! I can't allow Muriel, however much *she* may wish it, to have such a fate as the latter in store for her.

No, no, she must be sensible, and marry Lambert. It's a nuisance our having to go to the very place where this young Mowbray made love to her though. However, it can't be helped. Before a reality like the gout all sentimental considerations must give way, and Riesenheim is worth half a dozen Buxtons, they tell me!"

Muriel was certainly not happy. Her father's persistent refusal was more than she had expected. Like many girls who on the death of their mother have been put in a position of responsibility at home, she was all in all to her father. She had never known him resolutely set his face to deny her anything before. He had had his touches of temper, his occasional outbreaks of disappointment, his fits of reproof when he had been snowed up in the winter and his liver had got out of order, but she had never failed to bring him round, to coax him—and to get her own way. But now it was different. She had expected when she broached the matter not to receive at once the answer she wished. She knew that it would require diplomacy, *finesse*, and all the

arts of feminine pleading before consent would be given, but she had never despaired of success. She had written hopefully to Kit and had said that she was quite of her father's opinion that it would be better for them not to meet at present, but that she felt sure their separation would only be temporary. But her confidence was not justified. She had essayed every wile and woe in the whole region of her knowledge ; she had pleaded the "old, old cause" with tears and sobs and with laughter and repartee ; she had petitioned as a suppliant and demanded as a right ; she had appeared to relinquish her object—*reculer pour mieux sauter*—and then had renewed the attack with restored energy and with double *finesse* ; she had sulked, I mourn to say ; she had been hysterical ; she had tried what extra fondness would do and what extra coldness would do ; she had tried, in fact, every art and every emotion to shake her father's determination. But in vain. She felt that she was vanquished and that if her marriage with her lover was to be dependent—and of course she never dreamed of it being otherwise—

upon her father's consent and approval, their union was never likely to take place.

And she had set her heart upon that union now with all a woman's obstinacy and devotion. Months ago it had not seemed so difficult a thing, she thought, to banish the name and memory of Kit into oblivion. Her regard for him she fancied might after all be only sentiment and not affection. She had therefore done her best to acquiesce in her father's views when the new Dean came to take up his abode at Dartvennis. As long as it lasted her assumed coldness was very well acted, and she most satisfactorily succeeded in crushing Kit, as we know, but the *sustained* effort was beyond her. She felt that had her lover not gone away at the moment he did her histrionic powers would have broken down and she would have had to show him that she was not the cold, indifferent woman she affected to be.

And then sprung up the intimacy between her and Rosa Mowbray. From the sister she heard enough—dextrously insinuated into their mutual conversation and with that natural ease which is the hardest art—of

the brother, to cause the banked-up fires of her love to burn with a warmer glow. She heard of his official success, of his good conduct, of the white flower of a blameless life he was leading in town, and of the name he was obtaining in the *Censor*. Not a copy of that distinguished journal, you may be sure, which bore the signature of "C. Mowbray" but was read and treasured up in a certain room at Royston. Slowly and gradually along the dry sands of duty the spring-tide of her love was creeping up, and as wave succeeded wave duty appeared less and less, till at last all was bathed in the deep waters of an absorbing passion. She had tried to obey her father in the spirit of a true daughter, but had found that a woman's love was stronger than the tie of filial affection. She felt that the next time she met Kit and he showed that he was still her lover, the actress would have to succumb to the woman. She could be distant to him no longer. He was worthy of her love and she loved him. We know her answer to him in Wilton Crescent.

But her father's opposition? How could

she overcome that? and it must be overcome if she was ever again to be a happy woman. Many and earnest were the conversations that ensued on the subject between Muriel and Rosa; but alas! all the clever plans that were devised failed, and not a stratagem on which they trusted, but came most unmistakably to grief. Mr. Barillon was sterner than ever in his refusal to Muriel's prayers, and doubly more worldly-minded in the reasons he put forward to support his decision. The result was that the mental conflict was beginning to tell its tale upon Muriel. She hoped on, but it was with the hope deferred that makes the heart sick and the life suspense. She became nervous, hysterical, and out of health. It was necessary for her to try change of air.

“Good-bye, darling,” said Rosa, as Muriel came to the Deanery to pay a farewell visit before starting for the Continent. “I hope the change will do you good. Let us still hope on. Who knows but your father when he sees that your happiness is really at stake will give his consent?”

Muriel shook her head sadly. "You must not tell Kit anything about all this opposition," she said, "just yet. Of course, if I find that our union is really to be hopeless, I will write to him to release him. It is only fair to him. As for me, no one will ever hear of my marrying at all if papa is resolved to disappoint me. And as for that Mr. Lambert, with his spaniel-like devotion, he becomes more and more odious every day ! Well, good-bye, darling!"

"Good-bye ! You must write very often!"

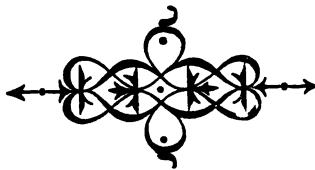
"Oh, of course. And you must do the same, and tell me all about *him*. I wonder whether he loves me as much as I do him, Rosa?"

"I am sure he does, poor boy ! Nothing would more delight me than to see you both happy."

"Well, said Muriel," summing up cheerfulness ; "perhaps it will turn out all right. The course of true love never did run smooth, they say. I wonder whether you will be Mrs. Scrope before I am Mrs. Christopher Mowbray, eh, Rosa?" And Muriel laughed like her old self.

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“ Oh, you silly thing !” said Rosa, blushing ; “ what ideas do come into that little head of yours ! I am *so* sorry we are obliged to say good-bye. I shall miss you very—*very* much, darling ! Good-bye !” And after numerous kisses and embraces the two parted.





## CHAPTER IV.

### “THE DIARY” LEAVES.

**M**URIEL, what did you tell me a few days ago about that fellow Hawtrey’s being here?” asked the Squire of his daughter as the two sat in the garden of the Stephanie.

“Why, papa?” asked Muriel.

“Because I’m sure I met him. He was walking with an old man along the promenade up to the castle when I passed him. I recognised him at once. What a wreck he has become! Didn’t you say something about his having become mad—delirium tremens, or something like that?”

“Yes, when we were last here, he went suddenly out of his mind, and tried one night to stab Mr. Mowbray. Since then I have heard that he has been kept in con-

finement in the Erzhalle, the Asylum here, but is now mending rapidly—at least so Professor Stüttmacher says, whom I met a few days ago. You remember when I returned home last summer I told you all about him, and you sent some money for him?"

"Did I? Well, I must go and see him some day—perhaps a little more money might be acceptable," said the Squire.

"Who are you going to see?" asked Sir George, puffing away at an enormous cigar, and coming up to them. "Helen has one of her nervous headaches, and is not coming out this afternoon—she's lying down."

"I am sorry for that," said the Squire, politely, though he did not much regret the absence of her jealous and frivolous ladyship, if the strict truth were known.

"Would Lady Barillon like me to sit with her for the afternoon?" asked Muriel.

"I am sure she would," said Sir George, smiling; "but perhaps it will be a penance for you this splendid afternoon, Muriel?"

"Oh, not at all! I will go and ask her whether she would care for my company."

and off Muriel started for the hotel, polite Frenchmen jumping off their chairs to make room for the tall, graceful girl as she threaded her way across the crowded lawn.

"What a charming creature that daughter of yours is, Geoffrey!" said Sir George, seating himself in Muriel's vacant chair.

"Yes, she's a nice girl!" replied the Squire, in that air of assumed indifference which some men adopt when they speak of their most priceless treasures.

"She seems rather fond of a young fellow called Mowbray. Nothing will come of it I suppose?" asked Sir George, nonchalantly."

"Nothing," replied the Squire, drily; "he hasn't a penny, and Muriel is no heiress."

"No, she's no heiress, but still it is in your power to settle something very handsome upon her," said Sir George, to whom Muriel had been rather confidential, seeing that he had considerable influence over her father. "Let me see, when Dick died there was something like 60,000/- in the County Bank, the proceeds of the Tyllwell farm, wasn't

there? Part of that would make a very respectable fortune for a young woman like Muriel. You were good enough to give me 20,000*l.* out of it, so there ought to be nearly 40,000*l.* left."

"There isn't a penny left of it," said the Squire. "I have sunk that and more in improvements. Royston has cost me an immense sum of money—in fact, so much that I shall be unable to make anything like a suitable provision for Muriel."

"That has not been very prudent of you," said Sir George.

"No, it has not; I own, and that's the reason I wish my girl to marry a man of fortune. When I succeeded to Royston, I never expected Arthur to live—nor, indeed, did your brother Dick—for he made a special clause in the will, devising the property, should Arthur die without heirs, to Muriel."

"Oh, yes, I know all about that," said Sir George, rather testily.

"The consequence was, that feeling pretty sure that Muriel would have to inherit the property, I did not trouble my-

self about making any special provision for her."

"And Arthur is quite well now?"

"As well as can be. Egypt in winter and Switzerland in the summer seem to agree with him wonderfully, and, like you, he hopes soon to be made a happy father."

"I congratulate him. Helen was asking me some little time ago whether there was a chance of my ever coming into the property; it seems pretty remote now." And Sir George laughed a little sadly.

"My ousting you was none of my seeking. As you well know, George," said the Squire, "no one was more astonished at being left Royston than I was. Your brother never hinted at such a thing to me, whatever he may have said to others, and the most I ever expected was that Muriel, of whom Dick seemed very fond, would be put down for some few thousands. I am sure had you contested the will, I should not have opposed you. But you didn't do so, and without the sanction of the Probate Court, it was impossible for me, as one of the executors and chief legatee, of my

own pure will and motion to have upset it."

"Oh, my dear fellow, no blame attached to you—we all know that. Perhaps I was a fool not to have gone to law upon the question of Dick's insanity; but it is a difficult matter to upset a will, and, besides, I was abroad. Had I been in England, I dare say I should have made a fight for it."

"By the way, of whom do you think Muriel and I were just talking when you came up? Why, of a man called Hawtrey, who was Dick's private secretary, and did all his antiquarian commissions."

"What about him?" asked Sir George, listlessly.

"Why, he's here. He always was fond of the bottle, as I soon found out at Royston, and now it appears that he has drunk himself into a lunatic asylum. I intend to see him some day. He was my steward for awhile, till the fellow had the presumption to aspire to Muriel and I had him turned out of the place."

"Gad, who *is* that man?" exclaimed Sir

George, hastily looking over the Squire's shoulder into the road ; “he always comes along here and stares at me till I get the shivers. Look at him now—he must be cracked if any man is !”

The Squire turned round, and saw Hawtrey ! He was alone this time, and was leaning over the small fence which separated the garden of the Stephanie from the road. His face was as pale as ever, but the intentness with which he regarded Sir George, who was but a few feet from him, made him look less livid than was his wont. Mr. Barillon exclaimed—

“ Why, that's the very man we were talking about ! He's Alick Hawtrey ! I'll say a word to him.” And the Squire rose from his seat and went towards his former steward.

“ Well, Hawtrey, do you remember me ?” asked the Squire, kindly ; “ I am glad to see that you are able to walk about again ; you've been very ill, I hear ?”

“ Yes, I know you,” said Hawtrey, without moving a muscle of his face, and still looking at Sir George. “ Why has he come

back again?" And he pointed to the ex-Governor.

"What, Sir George? Do you know him?"

"Why does he call himself Sir George?" said Hawtrey, gravely, and knitting his brows in thought. "When I knew him he was Richard—mad Dick they called him!"

"Oh, I see," said the Squire; "you take him for his brother. He's Sir George Barillon, the brother of your late friend Richard."

"No, no, he's Richard Barillon," said Hawtrey, with melancholy gravity, "and he has come back to judge me. See how sternly he watches me—those eyes of his are always watching me: they haunt me—I try to shun them, and yet I feel I must meet them." Sir George was looking at the man quite quietly, and with no expression of severity in his gaze.

"It seems to me, my good man," said Sir George, rising and coming forward, "that it is *you* who are always watching me, because for the last fortnight you have done nothing else but follow me about the town."

"Tell him not to come near me," said Hawtrey, quickly; "he frightens me."

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"Frightens you? Why should he frighten you?" asked the Squire. "Nonsense! Come inside and sit by us; we are having some hock and seltzer—it will do you good."

"I shall not come in," said Hawtrey, briefly and rudely.

"As you please," replied the Squire, turning away. "I shall come and see you some day, and hope to find you getting stronger and better."

"Is Miss Barillon with you? I remember her very well—very well." And he hung his head, as if in reflection. "Since I have seen him," and he pointed to Sir George, "I have been trying to think of the past and of the will; but I get confused—I get confused."

"What will?" asked Sir George.

"The last will you made," said Hawtrey, musingly.

"The last will *I* made?" exclaimed Sir George.

"He takes you for Dick," muttered the Squire under his breath to his cousin. "And what do you know about a last will?" asked the Squire.

"I did know about it—I did know about it," muttered the man half to himself, "but I have lost it now—things come before me and then vanish away before I can hold them. Ah, yes," he added, as if a sudden light had flashed upon him, "it was the will you made when you were dying."

"But, my good fellow, I," said Sir George, humouring the half-witted man in his idea that he was addressing his late master, "never made a will when I was dying."

"Yes, yes, you did make a will—I remember that; else why should I fear you?" said Hawtrey, retreating a little from the fence.

"And pray why should you fear me?" asked Sir George, quietly.

"I have been trying to think why," said Hawtrey, slowly; "but I do fear you. There was something I did which I cannot recall, but which makes me fear you; I cannot tell what it was, but—ah! I shall know some day, when I get better, perhaps—clearer in my head, I mean."

"Some delusion the man is labouring

under," said the Squire, *sotto voce*, to his cousin.

"Perhaps so, but it is somewhat curious," replied Sir George.

"Try to think what you are talking about," said Sir George, soothingly, addressing Hawtrey.

"I shall say no more," replied Hawtrey, abruptly. And without another word, and almost instantaneously he walked away.

"It's odd," mused Sir George. "I wonder whether there is anything in his statement about a second will?"

"Oh no," laughed the Squire; "how could there be? Besides, Jackson must have known of it, and then there would have been the witnesses. Oh no, it's all a delusion. A man in that state of mind gets all kinds of queer ideas in his head one after the other."

"I suppose so. Let us take a turn in the town—it's time for your second tumbler."

A few mornings after this conversation, the Squire was seated alone comfortably smoking his after-breakfast cigar in the garden, when a waiter brought him a bundle

of letters, and a small parcel which had just arrived by the English post. Among the batch was the following, from Kingairloch:—

“ Royston, Sept. 8, 18—

“ DEAR BARILLON,—You may remember some little time ago, when you were talking to me about selling your collection of coins, regretting that their inventory, drawn up by the late Mr. Richard Barillon, had disappeared.

“ Oddly enough, whilst going through your family papers, I came across, in a bundle of Inquisitions of the reign of Elizabeth, a capital list of these coins, perhaps the very list you were in quest of, which has evidently got amongst your documents by mistake, copied into a small book, entitled “ a diary,” but I see no diary whatever. As you mentioned to me that you thought Paris might be a better market for the sale of your collection than any place in London, I send you the book, so that on your way home you may show it if you wish to the dealers there. Isidore Tholosan, of the Rue de Seine, might be glad of your offer. Mention my name to him.

“ I am making very satisfactory progress with your papers, and find amongst them much valuable matter, which I hope soon to make public in my next report.

“ I trust that you find the waters at Riesenheim agreeing with you. The worst of all these German watering-places is that the effects of their medicinal springs are completely nullified by the indigestible diet, bad drainage, and irritating peculiarities of the inhabitants, that one has to put up with. When under medical regimen, the absence of all civilized customs is much more difficult to bear than at other times, and it is for that reason I can never summon up courage sufficient to visit Germany, though often ordered by the doctors. I wish I had a little of your heroism.

“ Pray remember me very kindly to Miss Barillon, and believe me,

“ Very truly yours,

“ DARRELL KINGAIRLOCH.

“ There is no need for your apologies. I am extremely comfortable here ; indeed, the only thing I have to complain of is your absence.”

“ Oh, oh ! ” said Mr. Barillon to himself. “ Let’s have a look at the book; a perfect list of these coins would be invaluable to me just now that I am intending to sell the collection. I never did care for coins.” And he opened the parcel.

It was a small thick diary book of the ordinary description, with only a few pages written upon. The Squire opened it carelessly and then began to examine its contents.

“ I know this handwriting,” said he, running his eye through the list of coins. “ Where have I seen it? It seems familiar to me, and yet I cannot recollect where I have seen it.” Whilst musing on this subject he turned the diary about and noticed for the first time that at the end of the book was a pocket which fitted so tightly to the cover that it was scarcely visible. The Squire from idle curiosity looked into the pocket, and there fell out a small packet of thin blue lined paper, stitched together and closely written upon, evidently the stray leaves of a diary. He took them up and read what they contained indifferently and then with intense interest:—

"*Oct. 4th.*—Done a good morning's work. Made a copy of the will which I accidentally found in his bedroom. It is all right. I am down for the 5000 $\ell$ . Copied also a list of his coins—must get those coins—worth money. The Squire seems ill, I fancy, and not himself at all. Complains of his heart and the cold. What did he want with the will?"

"*Oct. 14th.*—Squire evidently very ill and alarmed about himself. Has sent for the doctor for the first time for five years. Had a long conversation with me about the property. Is infernally testy. Wishes me to be steward to his successor should anything happen to him. Hope the doctor is mistaken, but he seems grave. Has sent up to town for consultation."

"*Oct. 20th.*—Mr. B. still in bed. Sent for me again to talk over matters. Still adheres to his intention of leaving the place to his cousin. What ambitious dreams cross my mind! Her brother is delicate—dying, they say. *She* may be an heiress. I must prevent this accursed parson Askew urging the Squire to render justice to

Sir George. I wish he would turn the five thousand he has put me down for into ten. I should have a fortune then."

" *Oct. 25th.*—The parson is often with the Squire, but does his cause more harm than good, I fancy. *The* delusion is fading. What a rage he was in with me! He has never been the same to me since. He wants to see his lawyer, but I told him that both Jackson and Linton were away on business. This news made him very testy, and he wanted to know who looked after the business whilst they were absent. I replied, Mr. Dawson, who was going to be taken into the firm. He said 'send for Dawson.' I am afraid that the parson has more influence than I imagine. Sir George and he were always good friends. What a blow this would be to all my dreams! Young, pretty, and seen but little of the world on that Norfolk farm, why shouldn't I win her? And what a prize! I wish I were not so fond of that accursed *absinthe*!—read this morning that once one has acquired a taste for it, it is impossible to abandon it. Must check myself. What *is* the matter with the

Squire? He has given up reading Voltaire. Have I cause to fear? Heard him say last night to Askew, that he would not leave Royston to Sir George. We are now ordered to refuse Askew admittance. Good. But have the delusions vanished? From his treatment of me they appear so.”

“Oct. 26th.—The Squire has seen Dawson. What a good thing he and I are boon companions! He seems as fond of the bottle as I am, but liquor tells upon him more than it does upon me. He had a long interview with the Squire alone in his bedroom this morning. Took him afterwards into my rooms and had some sherry and Angostura bitters together. Got it all out of him. The Squire has drawn up *another* will, leaving the whole property to Sir George, absolutely and entirely, and wants the old will. Asked him about the special legacies. He answered that he had seen nothing of them—no mention was made of any one but Sir George. Dawson is to go back and fetch the old will, and then he and I are to witness the Squire’s signature. Bar Dawson, the Squire refuses to see any one—

wont let any of his relatives come near the place : the doctor even has a difficulty in seeing him. So I lose my 5000!. How like the mad devil ! To hate a man all his life, and then on his deathbed leave him everything he has to the exclusion of those whom he has always promised to befriend ! But is he mad ? I have never seen him saner. So I am to begin life again a beggar ! A beggar and a bastard—what a future ! Let me think over matters, for they become serious ; if the delusion would only re-assert itself !”

“ *Oct. 26th, afternoon.*—The Squire is getting worse and worse. Very irritable. Refuses to see any one now, even the doctor. Perhaps things are not so bad as I imagine. Asked into his room. Went, and found Dawson there. The Squire was sitting up in bed with a large paper in front of him. ‘ I want you two,’ said he, ‘ to witness my signature to this document.’ He signed it, and then Dawson wrote his name under the signature. The Squire beckoned me to do the same, and I asked him what was the nature of the instrument we were witness-

ing. ‘A new will,’ he replied, curtly. I then hinted that I hoped he had not forgotten my services. ‘How do you mean forgotten?’ he asked. Told him that in his former will he had left me 5000*l.* ‘Perhaps that is a delusion on *your* part,’ whispered he to me, maliciously. He then ran his eye down the old will, which was lying on the bed, firmly grasped in his right hand, and he bade me sign. I did as he wished, for it was better to humour him in his present state. ‘Very well,’ said he, afterwards; ‘I shall not forget you.’ I hinted that there was no time like the present. He got into a passion, and ordered me out of the room. He then turned to Dawson and gave him the will we had just signed, and begged him to look over it, and to bring it on the morrow when he might perhaps add a codicil. Said he wanted to be left alone. We both were about to quit the room, when a slight scream made by the Squire caused us to turn round. We approached his bed, when he fell heavily back upon the pillow with the old will tightly clutched in his hand.”

Here the writing came to an end. The

Squire laid down the packet very gravely and mused for awhile.

“There is some foul play here if this can be depended upon. The handwriting is that of Hawtrey — some stray leaves from a diary that he has preserved. Where has that second will gone to? Dawson! I remember that name; he was a fellow in Jackson’s office who was had up before me for an assault on this scoundrel Hawtrey — for scoundrel I fear he is! Where is he gone to? What an awful thing it will be for me if we find that Dick *did* make a second will, leaving the place to George! But justice must be done. We must try and elucidate the truth from this madman. His friend, Professor Stüttmacher, whom Muriel talks about, might be useful. Askew, the rector, is dead, else one could write to him and get some clue to it. Coupled with what Hawtrey told me the other day it is very strange!”

“Halloa, Geoffrey!” said Sir George, coming up. “You look pale and grave. Anything the matter? Had another attack of the gout?”

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“Yes, something is very much the matter,” replied the Squire, gravely. “Read that packet and see what you make of it!”

And Sir George seated himself and read the portion indicated.





## CHAPTER V..

### THE SHRIEKS OF THE STREETS.

**M**EANWHILE Kit, unconscious of the opposition Muriel had to encounter, was slaving away at Whitehall during the vacation. At times he bewailed his fate, and thought it rather hard to be in town when the whole place was deserted, every house shut up, Marylebone and Prince's forsaken, the club undergoing repair, and scarcely a soul to talk to when he wandered about. The dusty streets, the white-hot pavement, the sultry atmosphere, all made him long the more for the breezes on mountain, moor, and lake, and to sigh with regret over his idle rod and equally idle breechloader.

But he felt that he would have been a fool to repine. Business is business, and when he

compared his position and prospects with many an old college friend of his at the Bar, in the Church, in the Army, or in any of the professions, he knew right well that he had very little cause for grumbling. Besides, with the exception of being obliged to remain in town, his lot was not arduous. His chief labours consisted in writing a few letters now and then to Lord Salamis, in sending and receiving telegrams, and occasionally in calling upon some head of a department for confirmation of intelligence. Thus he had ample time to devote to himself and to the objects he most affected.

Of this leisure the *Censor* now occupied the lion's share. Kingairloch was away at Dartvennis, busy on the Barillon papers for his report, which had to be out at the end of the year; the greater part of the staff were abroad or at the seaside, and only troubled themselves to write articles occasionally. Several new men who were hungering after literary employment had been taken on the paper during the dull season; and hence it was that with the exception of the sub-editor,

Kit was almost the only regular contributor of the *Censor* then in town. For Kingairloch having heard that Kit was obliged to be at the "Board" during the vacation, asked him to do duty for him as one of the editors, and the young man had consented.

The result was that Kit was now not only undertaking the literary labours of journalism, but also in a measure the conduct of its business. Every night from nine till one he was busy in the editor's room looking over proofs, selecting the letters that were to be inserted, examining the penny-a-liners' contributions to see that nothing libellous was contained amid their flowery rhetoric, toning down here and there a criticism that was too virulent or too eulogistic, deciding what leaders were to go in, and what articles were to be honoured with "leaded type," inspecting and judging the various telegrams, so as to prevent being hoaxed, eliminating from the police and other reports all that was objectionable, altering at the last moment the whole composition of the paper for the insertion of important news that had just arrived, and the multifarious other duties

which go to make up the proper management of a daily newspaper. The ordinary reader who perused the *Censor* at breakfast and generally concluded that "there was nothing in it," had but a very slight idea of the labour and anxiety which its production entailed.

Fortunately for Kit, Scrope, who was doing assistant-secretary work, was obliged to be in town at the same time, and thus each by constant companionship did his best to compensate for the loss of society to the other. To Kit, in the present state of his affairs, having a man like Scrope to talk to was an immense relief. Besides, he knew that his friend had a *tendre* for his sister Rosa, and that made him all the more confidential. He told him all about his love affair, and asked him over and over again whether he thought it would end propitiously.

"You see," said he, "in her letter to me she declared that it would turn out eventually as we both wished, and that her father, who had never refused her anything, would end by giving his consent."

"She will be a powerful advocate, no doubt," replied Scrope, "but at the same

time Miss Barillon is such a very pretty girl that one cannot be surprised at her father having more ambitious views for her than——”

“Oh, of course, I know that ; if I win her I shall be the luckiest man in all England ! But will the Squire give his consent ? that’s the rub ! I hate this suspense.

“Oh, gentle Scrope ! love’s a mighty lord,  
And hath so humbled me, as I confess  
There is no woe to his correction,  
Nor to his service, no such joy on earth !  
Now no discourse, except it be of love :  
Now can I break my fast, dine, sup, and sleep,  
Upon the very naked name of love.”

“Take my advice, my dear Mowbray,” said Scrope, in his quietest way, “and do not attempt to hurry on a decision. These matters must be taken quietly and require time to develop. The best thing you can do is to let your mind have, as it is now having, a full amount of occupation, so that reflection shall never grow morbid.”

“Oh, that’s all very well, but a man can’t help being worried, and I own I feel awfully worried about this affair.”

“Then you should not be worried,” said Scrope, gently. “Men like you and me,

who believe in a Providence that guides our actions, should be above being worried—the disbeliever worries, the believer submits.”

In spite of this teaching, however, Kit continued to worry himself not a little about Muriel. His sister had told him that his love had gone to Riesenheim, and bade him be patient and that all would yet be well. But the young man had very little of that philosophy which is so easy to teach, and so hard to practise. He wanted the matter to be decided at once in his favour ; he wanted to see Muriel, to write to her, and not let day after day pass without the slightest interchange of communion between them. At times he thought that he would write to Mr. Barillon again on the subject, and see if it was possible, by supporting Muriel, to alter his determination ; but then the prudence which follows in the wake of second thoughts made him, perhaps fortunately for himself, desist. Indeed, between the promptings of his own impulsive-ness and those dictated by honour, Kit spent his days in a state of feverish anxiety and misery.

Happy it was for him that during

this interval of suspense he was so interested in the work in which he was engaged that much of the unhealthy results of impatience and mental distress were frustrated. Feeling, as Scrope had advised him, that action was the best relief for an aching heart, he toiled away at the Board and at the *Censor* very much in the same spirit and for the same reasons as had induced Lord Byron to study Arabic—to drown suspense and to prevent the mind wearing itself out by reflection. In after-life he, however, confessed that this period was about the most irritating and miserable he had ever endured.

In addition to the duties of office and of journalism, Kit undertook the duties of a prominent member of a distinguished band of amateur philanthropists who were seeking to humanize the wretched inhabitants of the different squalid districts in London. The mission work started by Arthur Barillon in Stangate, and which in his continually enforced absence, owing to his inability to live in England, was now being carried on by a committee, had resulted in a host of imitators. A special society, called the Charity Scrutiny Society, com-

posed only of young men of the better classes, had been organized, which divided the whole of London into so many districts, and apportioned to each district one or two members to report on and to relieve as much as possible the pauperism therein contained. This society soon became an immense success. The Church took it under her wing and cordially co-operated with its labours. Fashion patronized it and subscribed handsomely. Practical reformers who sneered at a good many things said that it worked well and was a sound institution. Lords and Honourables enrolled themselves among its members, and were not the least useful and energetic of the community. In fact, the West End, through its young men, was beginning in real earnest to leave cards upon her afflicted sister the East End.

Upon the committee of this society both Kit and Scrope were actively engaged, and every Monday had to investigate a whole host of cases and do their best to distinguish between the wiles and woes of poverty. Very often it became their lot to visit the different parishes and examine for themselves the exact nature of

the matters laid before them. It was a work of no little labour, but its utility was unquestioned. Indeed, there was some talk of the Government not being above modelling a little of its Poor Law procedure upon the plan of action of the society.

One Saturday evening, it was about the beginning of September, as Kit was at his club yawning in the empty library after dinner, and commenting audibly on the weariness of isolation, Scrope came up to him.

“What are you going to do to-night, Mowbray?” said he.

“Really I don’t know—it’s my off night at the *Censor*!—I was thinking whether I should have a sleep and then read, or read first and then sleep. It is a momentous question—advise me!”

“Of the two, certainly read first and then sleep—sleep is the digestion of reading,” said Scrope, sitting by his side.

Just then one of the pages of the club entered the room and handed Kit a telegram. It was opened hastily as such messages generally are, and ran as follows:—

"The House Surgeon of St. Mary's Hospital, Shoreditch, would be glad if Mr. Mowbray could call at the Hospital this evening about nine, to see a patient."

Kit showed it to Scrope. "I suppose it is the old thing," said he; "some patient wants the society to look after wife or husband or children, whilst he or she is in the hospital."

"I suppose so," said Scrope, for requests of this kind were very common with the young men.

"It's an awful way off to Shoreditch, though," said Kit. "Never mind, it's something to do!"

"Get there in half an hour in a Hansom!"

"Come with me?"

"Well, I have half a mind," began Scrope, musingly, and then stopping.

"Half a mind!" laughed Kit. "Now don't exaggerate Scrope! What are you thinking about?"

"Well, I was just thinking about coming with you. I have a few cases at Hoxton

and Bethnal Green that want looking into, and we might go together."

"Well, come along then! It's now eight, and we shall have plenty of time."

"Agreed! But let us have coffee first," said Scrope.

"All right," yawned Kit.

Half an hour afterwards the two young men, thanks to a speedy Hansom, whose driver had not had a fare for a week, were deposited on the pavement in front of Shoreditch Station. It was there they had elected to alight.

"Did you ever hear such a row?" said Kit, linking his arm into that of his friend, and regarding the closely packed pavement stalls, with their energetic vendors advertising the excellence of their wares, whilst haggling purchasers were depreciating everything they bought in order to obtain the abatement of a penny or a farthing. "I take it that our illimitable metropolis gives utterance to the worst cries from early morn to dewy eve, that mortal man ever invented to awake attention and to create purchase. Abroad there is a touch of music, almost of

poetry, in the calls of the itinerant vendors, but here, good heavens ! there is about as much music as there is in the whistle of a locomotive. Just listen !”

There certainly *was* a row. Saturday night is, to use an Irishism, market-day amongst the poor ; and as Kit and Scrope wended their way past the barrows, stalls, and wicker baskets stocked with the various goods that poor humanity can suggest or require, there seemed to be no end to the Babel-like sounds heard on all sides “Buy, buy, buy ! who’ll buy ? Prime chops, only fourpence a pound ! The wery best meat at the wery lowest prices ! Here you are, mum, take this lot for sixpence, and put it in your pocket quickly, without sayin’ nothing about it ; I wouldn’t let the sheep on my premises know that I was a sellin’ of ’em so cheap for worlds. Thank *you*. Buy, buy !” “Here yer are : vegetables for yer Sunday’s dinner—pertatoes, kearrots, inions ! tuppence the lot !” “Three a penny Yarmouth bloaters !” “Now’s yer time, if yer wants to write to yer sweethearts : a quire of paper and a packet of henvelopes for a penny—only a

penny ! Why don't you bid ?" "Eight a penny walnuts !" "She-roots, she-roots ! who wants to buy real Hawannas, mild as milk and strong as gunpowder ?" "Whelks, penny a lot ; no hextra charge for pepper and vinegar !" "All 'ot, all 'ot, prime taters, hexported from Ireland this 'ere wery morning ! With the kind permission of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, salt given in gratis." "'Ere you are, ladies and gents, the genuine medicated soap ; takes out everything, from spots on the face to stains on a tablecloth ! Warranted to soften the hardest substance, from a bit of granite to a woman's temper. 'Ere you are ! Thank you, sir !" "Onions ! onions ! four a penny onions !" "Buy, buy, ornaments for yer fire stoves !" "Brooms and brushes ! come to old Dolly, for your brooms and brushes !" "'Ere yer are, real pineapple rock, fresh from the West Indies, only a penny the ounce !" "Watercreeses ! watercreeses !" "Dog collars ! steel chains and pincers ! who wants a collar for their little dawg ?" "Pity a poor blind man ! Who'll buy laces from a poor blind man ?" And so on

through the whole gamut of the yells of cadgerdom.

“ You are in no hurry, I suppose ? ” said Kit ; “ I have a good half-hour to spare, and as we are here, I vote we study a little of low life. They say one half of the world doesn’t know how the other half lives ; we might pick up a little useful information.”

“ Very well,” replied Scrope, “ as long as I pay my visits before ten it will do ; the later the better for me, as my people are sure to be out till past nine, buying things for Sunday. What’s this crowd about ? ”

They stopped before a small gipsy cart which was drawn close up to the pavement. On its narrow platform in front of the shaft was a little keen-eyed, dark visaged man, selling slop clothes, which he brought out one after the other from the dark interior of his cart. A huge placard advertised the excellence of his garments.

“ He’s a wag—this man,” said Kit, reading the placard, which ran as follows :—

“ Jonas and Co., clothiers to mankind. Lord Palmerston is dead ! Yes : that great statesman who so long has held the reins

of power, and has been the foremost man of his age ; whom all Englishmen honour whilst they mourn ; whose life stands out as the perfect model of truth, wisdom, and justice : he is, alas, no more ! We loved him with a nation's pride ; we regret him with a nation's sorrow. Ah, it will indeed be long ere we look upon his like again ! Methinks I see him now, wending his way to fulfil his legislative duties, clad well, but economically, in the superfine frock-coat of Jonas and Co., price twenty-eight shillings (we also supply a coat less rich, but equally durable, for one pound) ; in the superior Kensington vest, price four shillings (Piccadilly vests three shillings ; Albany vests, best Angola, two shillings ; the Victoria vest, one-shilling-and-sixpence), and in our eighteen-shillings' irreproachable inexpressibles (we can do this article for from three-shillings-and-sixpence to a pound) ; whilst his manly form wears not only our excellent garments (adapted for all climates), but also the expression of one who feels and knows that he is stylishly attired ! Gentlemen of the great Metropolis, would you wish to

imitate the sublime example of that great statesman? Then come to Jonas and Co., and you will be satisfied. Remember it is the tailor who makes the man, and unless you are a man, how can you become a statesman? Then come to Jonas and Co. Stand not on the order of your coming, but come at once. Manners make the gentleman. From Jonas and Co. you are sure to get good habits: we have them at all prices.

“ Oh, come into the garden, Maud,  
And sit beneath the rose;  
And see me prance about the beds,  
Dressed in these wond’rous clothes.

“ Oh, come and bring your uncles, Maud,  
Your sisters and your aunts;  
And tell them Jonas made my coat,  
My waistcoat, and my pants.”

Mr. Jonas seemed to be doing a brisk trade, for the chaff of a cheap Jack always goes down with an English crowd. For a moment Kit and Scrope added themselves to his audience.

“ To proceed to my next article, ladies and gentlemen,” said the man, blandly, “ I produce a vest. I sell this vest for

three-and-sixpence. Going for three-and-sixpence, gentlemen. No offer! Have none of the nobility and gentry that I see around me three-and-sixpence? Well, I will not be hard upon you,—I wish to live and let live,—say half-a-crown for this really very excellent article, and I feel myself positively blushing at offering it at such a low figure. Half-a-crown, gentlemen, and pray do not speak all at once. What (with sham indignation), no one willing to bid! My generous abatement of one shilling received in silence? Gentlemen, is it possible that in this bewitching part of the metropolis you do *not* wear vests? Am I to understand that no one has half-a-crown amongst you? This is indeed a painful fact! Poverty like this touches my heart. Can I lend any of you gentlemen half-a-crown? (Loud cries of “Yes!”) Your unanimity is heartrending: I shall be happy to lend you the sum (puts his hand in his pocket, but draws it out empty). I regret, gentlemen, that I have left my purse on the piano in my back drawing-room, and therefore am, for the present, unable to oblige you. Well, take

the vest for a shilling ! And here, cover up that boy's face, and don't let him see the meanness of human nature. A vest like this for a bob ! What, now no bidders ! Here, you sir : wont you buy this vest ? Wont your wife let you spend a shilling ? I wouldn't be married to a woman who wouldn't let me spend a shilling. Ah, I'm glad you are not going to be henpecked ! There you are, sir : worth double the price. Thank you : thank you." And away went waistcoat after waistcoat, one after the other, till the man must have sold about fifty. Kit seized the opportunity of a slack moment to ask the loquacious clothier a few questions about himself.

" Yes, sir," he frankly replied, " I received a good education, but ran away to sea. Was a sailor for ten years, but gave up the sea, and took to hawking. Been two years assistant to a cheap Jack ; then took to selling willow-baskets, mats, cradles, and the like round the country on my own hook ; but I do this kind of thing in autumn and winter : it pays better. Can I make a living by it ? Of course I can. How

do I do it? Why, I buy the pick of the clothes at the Rag Fair in Houndsditch, from the Jews and the Irish, and from the crockery-men, who exchange vases for old coats and trowsers; then have them sent into the Minories to be pressed and revived, and out they come as superb, bran-new garments. Is it honest? Honest! what do you mean? Who are you talking to? Do you want any clothes? Well, then, hold your jaw. Who the devil are you, I should like to know? Eh? Who the devil are you?"

"Let us move on," whispered Scrope; "else the man of good habits will fall into bad ones."

On they sauntered through thronged and yelling Shoreditch, till they arrived at the top of Bethnal Green Road. Here a man with a white apron and a portable tray in front of him, covered with small packets, was expatiating to a little crowd upon the excellence of his wares, and proving that they were the one great cure for all the ills that flesh was heir to. The two young men again stopped and listened.

"Now permit me, gents, to show you these 'ere herb mixtures. You all see the

kegorree root. Well, what about it? Why, gents, the properties of this 'ere wegetable is wonderful to behold ; there ain't anything like it in this 'ere sublunary semisphere. I (with an air of pride, and his hand on his heart) was the first to introduce it into this country, and the effect it has produced is truly surprising'. It is the best cure for everything, from a cold to a spinal complaint (a crowd gathers round him). Yes, gents : the kegorree root which I have had the honour of introducing into this country from the East, and which has been patronized by all the Oriental Courts, from the Emperor of China to the King of Greenland, removes toothache, heartburn, bile, rheumatism, dimness of sight, loss of hair, corns, high-strokes, dropsy, consumption, and water on the brain. It also acts as a tonic, and no sick room should be without it. Owin' to the truly surprising consumption that the article has received in this country, I am able to sell it at the ridiculous price of two-pence per packet. Gents, if you think all this is self-praise, let me read you a few

testimonials. Here you are: 'For five years I was confined to my bed with pleurisy of the pericardium, and my case was considered hopeless by all the doctors. I took one packet of your world-famed root, and the next day I was enabled to walk five miles without inconvenience. Since then I have never known a day's sickness. Mr. Jenkins, chemist, Sunderland.' Here is another, gents: 'For three years I was laid up with an ulcerated leg, and unable to move. All the doctors recommended amputation, but one external application of your renowned root removed all the symptoms, and I am now able to ride about as usual. From a mounted policeman in Ireland.' Gents, why there are a hundred of such testimonials, from rheumatic old gentlemen, from mothers with troublesome babes, from everybody. Twopence a packet: cures all the 'ills that flesh is heir to.'" And the quack herbalist seemed to do a goodish trade among the credulous of his audience.

Down the narrow causeway of Shoreditch, till it meets the Hackney-road, Kit and Scrope proceeded, still amid the din of cries.

“Penny pies, all 'ot! all 'ot!” “Boots and shoes, pick and choose, only two bob a pair!” “Sherbet, ginger beer, or lemonade!” “Box of matches, gents!” “Trotters! prime trotters!” “Spectacles, spectacles, only sevenpence a pair!” “'Ere yer are: dolls three a shilling!—a real gold watch, with key and chain complete, for sixpence! What do you want? Nutmeg graters, exhibition medals, gals' work-boxes, smellin' bottles, needle cases,—anything you like! Begin at a penny and go up to a pound if you wish!” “Walking sticks!—a real bamboo cane with an ivory head only a penny!” “Meerschaum pipes, three for a shilling!” “Lace collars! Who'll buy lace collars from a poor widow? will you, sir?” “Fresh fish, all alive-oh!” “Prime soles, fourpence a pair, all alive-oh!” “Eels, fresh eels, all a-wriggling and longin' to be biled!” “Oysters, three a penny!” “Twelve a penny, walnuts!” “Your portrait cut out in black and two red herrings for fourpence!” “Taters all 'ot! all 'ot!” “Who's for taters? Taters, sir?” And most appetizing the potatoes looked in their crisp

brown jackets ("Wish we could get them at the club like that!" ejaculated Scrope), lying heaped together in the hot tray of the steaming can.

"Do a good business, my man?" said Kit, who was of an inquisitive turn of mind, and somewhat too fond of asking questions. "Pretty tidy, sir: most folks is fond of baked taters, and very respectable folk too, only the very respectable folk buys 'em hurried like, and eats 'em at 'ome, as if they was ashamed of eating taters in the streets; though what there's to be ashamed of I can't see. A hungry man a-eating of a beautiful white mealy tater is a pictur. But people sees things different in this 'ere world. Make a good profit? Well: I shalln't keep my carriage and pair, and I shalln't see the workus'. The tater trade was better some years ago than it is now, but still a livin's to be made out of it. Want to know how a livin's to be made out of it? Well, it ain't no secret. I buys 300 taters for a crown, and I pays seven-pence to my baker for a-bakin' of 'em. When they are baked I puts 'em in this

'ere piping 'ot can, and sells 'em at two a penny. How many I sells? Well: on a cold frosty night, when there's been skatin' on the Surpentine or the 'Ackney Marshes, I've sold well-nigh on three hundredweight, that's about 900 taters. Oh, it ain't a bad business, but it only lasts half the year; for you see taters gets bad about May, and continues so till August. Young taters ain't no good for our trade; it's only swells as can afford to pay a doctor that eats them nasty waxy little things. What do I do when I don't sell taters? Why, I sells trotters, two a penny, at the public-houses; but that ain't a good business, there's too many women in it, and they sells cheaper than we men. Good-night to you, sir, and thank you for nothing!"

Close to the potato salesman was a little old man before a stall covered with second-hand books, and an open umbrella full of songs and pamphlets.

"Improve your minds, gents: improve your minds! Can't improve your minds unless you read. And when you *does* read, read only old books: modern books is

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trash. Buy ! buy ! any of this 'ere literature from one penny to sixpence. Buy a book, sir ?" added he, addressing Kit, who seemed never tired of halting to examine the different curiosities presented for sale.

Kit turned over his truck literature : a few copies of the *Quarterly Review*, an *Annual Register*, an Enfield's "Speaker," an odd volume of the *Tatler*, "Robinson Crusoe," Young's "Night Thoughts," "Gulliver's Travels," an odd volume of Hume, the "Pilgrim's Progress," and mutilated editions of the poets. He then gazed into the umbrella, and there read "patterers'" songs about every murderer of note. Very improving this last.

"Do you do much business?" again asked the inquiring Kit.

"Pretty tidy in winter. Who buy 'em ? Why, mechanics, shop-lads, young City clerks, and milliners' gals. The mechanics buy books on history and geography, the young clerks buy the poetry, and as for the gals, they buy the novels and hymn-books. Oh, yes: one makes a living by it; some weeks I get eighteen shillings, and others fifteen

shillings. If it went on all the year round, I needn't complain; but in summer-time folks don't read. What do I do in the summer? Why, attend the races, and sell c'rect cards, and in the evenings sell prints to servant-gals in the suburbs. Getting too old now to run about at race-meetings, and intend next summer to stick to prints. Oh, I can do pretty well at that: buy 'em from the shops at fivepence a dozen, and then sell 'em at a penny each. Murder songs used to sell well, but the old 'uns are so stale now, and murders ain't so plentiful as they used to be in my young days. Oh dear! I don't know what we are a-coming to!"

"I say, what a roaring trade that man selling coffee seems to be doing," said Kit, pointing to a white-aproned man at the corner of the street. "I wonder whether it's nasty—let us taste it, eh?" Scrope shook his head, and refused to let himself be persuaded. "I have wanted to know what kind of stuff they give to the poor. They seem to like it, though. See the men and women and boys sheltering themselves behind his canvas-screen, and warming them-

selves before his two large, hot tin-cans, whilst drinking their mugs of hot liquor, and munching their slices of buttered bread ! How they seem to enjoy it !”

“ Yes, it’s not a bad business,” said Scrope. “ I know something about it from the widow of one of these salopians, who came to me about emigrating ; she’d have been left well off, only her husband drank every farthing away. That man over there makes, I haven’t the slightest doubt, more than an admiral, or a colonel of an infantry regiment, or hundreds of men at the Bar, or thousands of men in the Church. In the present over-crowded state of the professions, and with the great question agitating seven domestic circles out of every eight, of “ what are you going to do with your boy ?” one might do worse, in a pecuniary point of view, than turning him into a salopian.”

“ Well, that is one resource left for us at least,” said Kit, “ if the Government should take it into its head to cut us down. I’ll go and talk to him, and see whether it is such a good thing as you make out.” And accordingly Kit approached the coffee-stall

keeper, ordered a cup of coffee, and, biding his time, began to interrogate the salopian.

“ Yes, as you say, sir, it is a good business, and we ain’t got no cause for to go to complain. You wants to know what profit I make? Well, some people is mighty fond of axing questions; but as you say you wants it for a good purpose, I’ll answer you. See them two large tin-cans? Well, they each holds five gallons, of good, wholesome, hot coffee. A pound of coffee at one shilling a pound, with two quarts of milk at three-pence a quart, and two pounds of sugar at also threepence a pound, goes to make a five-gallon tin of coffee. All that summed up comes to two bob, don’t it? Well, I sells the coffee at threehalfpence a pint, or three-pence a quart; four quarts make me a gallon, so you see my five gallons brings me in five bob. Deduct two bob, and also twopence for the charcoal as keeps the coffee ’ot, and you’ll see—if you knows anything of ’ithmetic—that two and twopence from five bob leaves two and tenpence clear profit; that’s five and eightpence on the two cans, you see. How many gallons do I sell in a

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night? Well, I've got a good 'pitch' (situation) here, and 'ave 'ad it for the last ten years; and I've sometimes taken, including night and morning, as much as two pun ten in a day; but I'm quite content if I take between twenty and thirty bob: some people don't make as much in a week. It depends on the 'pitch' you gets, and this 'ere pitch is one of the very best in London. Oh, yes, the peelers protect me, and wont let any one set up in my place. Oh, you're quite welcome!"

And Kit, having got all the information he required, and handing his almost untouched mug of chicory to a little boy, rejoined Scrope, who was gazing at some crucifixes in a portrait-shop.

"Well, I think," said he, rejoining his friend and looking at his watch, "that it's time for me to pay my visit to the hospital."

"And for me to wend my way to my own applicants," said Scrope. And as the two had to go in opposite directions, they parted, agreeing to meet in an hour's time at Moorgate-street station.

A few minutes' walk brought Kit to St. Mary's Hospital. He did not trouble himself in the slightest about the nature of his visit, for nothing was more common than for the poor who were befriended by the society, when forced to go into an hospital, to beg assistance for the relatives left behind them. He naturally concluded that the patient who wanted to see him was one of the numerous "cases" that had of late fallen to his lot to inquire into. Indeed, owing to everybody being out of town (you would not have thought it down Shoreditch way, though) Kit and Scropé were now the chief managers of the society, and on their shoulders most of the business devolved.

Arrived at the hospital, he was ushered into a little waiting-room, and sent up his card to the house-surgeon. At the end of some five minutes a little bald-headed man, with gold spectacles spanning a very prominent nose, entered.

"I am sorry you have arrived too late. The patient died half-an-hour ago. His death was sudden, but not unexpected."

"Pray, who was the patient?" asked Kit.

"A man called Dawson. He was a penny-a-liner on your paper, the *Censor*."

According to his promise to the stranger he met in the shed near Dartvennis, Kit had put Dawson on the *Censor*, first as penny-a-liner, and afterwards as hack to the sporting correspondent, for which post there was fortunately a vacancy. The man knew what he was about, and, though the pay was indifferent, could give as graphic an account of a pigeon-match at Hurlingham, a cricket-match at Lord's, a racquet-match at Prince's, a meet of the fours-in-hand, and of course of all the racing movements at Newmarket, Epsom, Doncaster, and Liverpool, as the sporting contributor himself. Occasionally it became Kit's lot from his connexion with the *Censor* to see Dawson, and in many little ways he had tried to befriend him, for the man, in spite of his appearance, had his good points, and, could he only have abandoned his habit of drinking, might yet have saved himself from the abyss of misery and degradation he had evidently fallen into.

“ For Mr. Mowbray,” Dawson used often to say, “ he would go through fire and water to serve : when he talks to me in his manly, simple way of what I ought to do, and the like, it makes me feel as if I’d like to amend and be respectable once more, only I can’t ! ” Unfortunately Kit’s advice did not bring forth fruit abundantly, for Dawson still found brandy his great consolation, and whenever he received money for his contributions to the *Censor* and other papers, drank it away, and gambled it in sporting publics. He, however, was very careful whenever business brought him into Kit’s presence, to be sober and orderly in his behaviour.

“ Good heavens ! ” said Kit, startled at the intelligence, for he had seen Dawson but a few days ago well and hearty. “ What was the matter with him—what did he die of ? ”

“ He was knocked down yesterday at Broad Street Station whilst crossing the line by an engine, which ran over both his legs. He was at once brought here, but the case from the very first was hopeless—it

was only a question of hours. All yesterday he was insensible, but this morning he rallied, and about four o'clock this afternoon became perfectly conscious. He asked us whether there was any hope, and we thought it better to tell him the truth. He took the news very calmly, and begged that a Roman Catholic priest might be sent for. We complied with his request, and for upwards of an hour he and the priest were closeted together. At the end of this time, I was desired to come into the room to witness the patient's signature to a paper that the priest had drawn up. I did so. It was now that he asked to see you, but I told him that he was in too exhausted a state to receive any one else just at present, but that I would give him an opiate which would send him to sleep for a couple of hours, and that I would ask you to be here about nine. He seemed anxious to see you, and I did not like to defer the interview till to-morrow, for his life was so uncertain. But it so happened that he awoke from the opiate an hour before I expected, and was in a high state of fever. He asked after

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you the first thing, and when he heard that you were coming at nine, smiled sadly, and said that it would be too late as he felt he could not last another hour. He desired me almost with his dying breath to give you this paper," and the house-surgeon pulled out a sheet of blue paper closely written upon. "It is the document I had been asked to witness. You are to read it here, and then return it to me, as I have to forward it on to the priest. It is a confession of some sort, I believe, and concerns you."

"Concerns me?" said Kit, astonished.

"Yes, it is something to do with some people called the Barillons. You are engaged to a Miss Barillon, are you not?"

"No, I am not," said Kit, a little haughtily; "but what has this to do with Dawson?"

"I understood him certainly to say that he had heard when he met you at Dart—Dart—"

"Dartvennis?"

"Yes, at Dartvennis—that the gossip of the town said that you were so engaged.

Well, any way, Dawson said that he wished you to read that paper, and to forgive him the injury he had done you." And the house-surgeon handed Kit the document.

" You can sit here and read it whilst I go into yonder room to talk to one of the nurses. I shall be back in a quarter of an hour," said he, as he took his departure.

The next minute Kit was seated before the empty grate eagerly perusing the document.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAWYERS.

**N** the High Street of Dartvennis, opposite to the County Bank, there stands a solid red-bricked house, such as you see in many a county town; square-shaped, high-chimneyed, and furnished with innumerable long narrow windows, a few of which had been blackened and filled up to save the tax of former days. There is a character about such provincial mansions which helps you to form no bad idea both of their interiors and of their owners. You can guess at a glance that within their walls there is an utter absence of all modern improvements, and that hot and cold water pipes, bath-rooms, electric bells, elaborate fire-ranges, gas-fittings, and

the like were never within the cunning of their architects.

Also you may rightly conclude that no smug tradesman, no fast young professional man, none of the local dandy merchantocracy, would ever dream of taking up their abode in such antiquated quarters. No one but a bachelor, and one, too, of the old school, old fashioned, and not at all given to the ways and habits of modern life—say an elderly lawyer, or a doctor who has outlived his practice—*could* ever care to live there.

In such a house you are pretty sure of finding curious woodwork in most of the numerous small rooms and on the wainscotted staircase; no lack of rare old engravings set in black frames; some very curious lots of books, the furniture antique and uncomfortable, with here and there a modern chair or sofa, looking as much out of place as rouge on a corpse; not an atom of Sèvres or Dresden anywhere, but Oriental china of the good grocers' pattern in every cabinet and almost under every chair—in short, a house where you need never expect *entrées* or claret, but where the plain roast

and boiled are done to perfection ; where the dinner service is willow pattern, and the dessert plates the rare and invaluable green leaf ; where the bright black mahogany always shows its face when the wine and biscuits are put on the table, where you may put as much port and sherry under your belt as you like, without fear of consequences ; where your host calls you occasionally " sir," and where your hostess is perhaps not above joining you in your whisky-and-water before going to bed. Now do you understand the kind of house ?

In such an establishment lived Mr. Jackson, the senior partner of the firm of Messrs. Jackson and Linton, and the chief lawyer of the cathedral town of Dartvennis. The lower rooms of the house were used as offices, and it was only in the upper part that you came across the carved woodwork, the fine engravings, the quaint tomes, and drank the generous port or soft dry sherry, which I have just informed you is rather characteristic of these provincial dwellings.

A fine old man is Mr. Jackson, bearing his sixty-five winters as bravely as the best

of us, and were it not for a little stiffness in the joints, showing no signs of age. His hair has not a touch of grey, but is as black as jet ; he can read without glasses ; his figure is erect, and his hand is as steady when out cover-shooting as it was twenty years before George the Third died.

A man well preserved in every way is Mr. Jackson, and yet one cannot tell why he should be so. Ever since youth lost itself in manhood he has taken his sherry, and port, and grog of an evening with a liberality that would wreck three out of every five. He does not smoke, but he takes snuff enough to paralyse any ordinary intellect. He is somewhat fond, after dinner, of telling stories of his youth, which show that he must have led at one time a hardish, not to say rakish life, and yet here he is at sixty-five, clear-headed, clear-eyed, with not a false tooth in his gums ; he can hunt, shoot, walk, and if need be, drink with the best of the youngsters around. Certainly it would lead one to think that diet and temperance

do not work the wonders attributed to them.

Mr. Linton, the other partner, is a very different kind of man. He never touches wine or spirits ; he always goes to bed early and gets up at cock-crow ; he is said never to have transgressed any of the commandments, Divine or hygienic, and yet he is always ailing and sickly, and easily knocked up. Though some fifteen years younger than his partner, he has never put his leg over a horse for the last decade, has never had a gun in his hand since breech-loaders were invented, and could no more take an eight-mile stretch without feeling its after effects than he could see a deed without his glasses. Mr. Jackson, broad and big-limbed, has something of a contempt for his feeble and delicate partner, but on the whole the two are very good friends.

When men have to act together, and to bear a joint responsibility, the great thing is a proper and recognised division of daily labour. Now such division existed in the firm of Messrs. Jackson and Linton, and quite in accordance with the tastes of each

of the partners. The wags of Dartvennis used to christen the two lawyers Mind and Matter, for Mr. Jackson, though a good man and true, was not nearly so sound or able as the delicate Mr. Linton, and indeed was not a little indebted to his sickly partner for much of the reputation the firm enjoyed. But as I have said, the duties were well divided. Mr. Jackson, sociable and well-mannered, was the partner who added to the business by putting himself forward in county matters; who cultivated the acquaintance of the gentry in his part of the shire; who was the guest, and perhaps a little bit of a toady to the great, and whose duty it was to give dinners—simple but excellent, and with wines of the rarest *crûs*—to promising clients. He it was who was always invited to stay a few days in the country houses around, who dined out frequently, who had hampers and haunches sent him by an obliged squirearchy, who, during the shooting season, though he owned not an acre or a cover of his own, never lacked a day's sport when he wanted, and who during the months of May, June,

and July was not unfrequently seen in London, where he found the dinners and the society of the Oxford and Cambridge Club much to his taste. Mr. Linton, shy and reserved, stopped at home and did the work.

“I say, Linton, I’m going off to Cleeford this morning. I hear old Andrew’s mare is to be put up for sale. I think she’ll do for me. She’s up to fifteen stone, I’m sure—eh?” said Mr. Jackson, entering his partner’s room—a small apartment, walled with tin boxes labelled with the names of all the gentry in the western division of Limeshire.

“I don’t know,” coughed Mr. Linton; “I am no judge of horses. By the way, I’ve had a letter from Mr. Barillon, wanting to know whether we ever heard anything about the late Squire making a will on his death-bed. Odd idea that to come into his head, isn’t it? He says some stray leaves from a diary have been found among the Barillon papers which would suggest that such a will had been made, and that it had been witnessed by Hawtrey, the late Squire’s private secretary, and by that fellow Dawson, whom you remember we were

was only a question of hours. All yesterday he was insensible, but this morning he rallied, and about four o'clock this afternoon became perfectly conscious. He asked us whether there was any hope, and we thought it better to tell him the truth. He took the news very calmly, and begged that a Roman Catholic priest might be sent for. We complied with his request, and for upwards of an hour he and the priest were closeted together. At the end of this time, I was desired to come into the room to witness the patient's signature to a paper that the priest had drawn up. I did so. It was now that he asked to see you, but I told him that he was in too exhausted a state to receive any one else just at present, but that I would give him an opiate which would send him to sleep for a couple of hours, and that I would ask you to be here about nine. He seemed anxious to see you, and I did not like to defer the interview till to-morrow, for his life was so uncertain. But it so happened that he awoke from the opiate an hour before I expected, and was in a high state of fever. He asked after

clutched in his hand that it had to be cut out of his grasp."

"Oh, not only that," said Mr. Linton; "but when I heard he was ill, and knowing that we had business in Chancery which required my immediate attendance in London—you remember you were at Quebec all that time about those railways—I went up to Royston myself, and, after a deal of bother, was allowed to see the old man. I asked him whether he was likely to want any legal matters arranged, as I was off for London and you were away. He said no, that everything had been settled, and that if anything happened to him the property would go to his cousin, and that we had the will. Neither to me nor to Askew, who was with him *the very day* before his death, did he breathe a word about making a new will. Dawson was a scoundrel, but I see no reason why we should not believe his account of the interviews with the late Squire."

"No, of course not!" said Mr. Jackson. "I see he writes from Riesenheim—that's where Sir George and his lady are! Well,

you know I have always held that Sir George ought to have contested that will; and I should think, now that he is going to live in England, and be, perhaps, a prolific father—how you and I, Linton, ought to thank our stars that we never managed to fall into the meshes of the fair sex, eh? Well, as I was saying, I should think Sir George now must regret he did not make a fight for Royston."

"Ah! but it is a very difficult thing to upset a will, and to convince a jury that a man who has managed his affairs all his life for himself is insane. Besides, the law is so very hazy about the definition of insanity. The late Squire was eccentric and excitable, it is true, but I doubt if any one could honestly swear that he had a single delusion, and to prove insanity you must have delusions. I myself have no doubt about his not being of a sound and disposing mind, but yet, if I were called as a witness, I should find it very hard to prove my opinion."

"Oh, there'd be no difficulty about it," said Mr. Jackson, who seldom made difficul-

ties about anything. "Why, the fact of a man's hating his brother as he did Sir George, without either rhyme or reason, would be enough to prove any one insane. And then look at the way he behaved to his tenants, threatening to shoot them like rabbits if they did anything he disapproved of! Look at the splendid way he fitted up the drawing-room—thousands upon thousands spent on it!—and then shut up till his death, and not a soul allowed to enter it! Look at the mad way he excluded himself from the society of every one! Why he died like a rat in his hole!"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Linton, quietly; "but all that doesn't prove a man legally insane. Odd, violent, capricious, eccentric, and all that kind of thing—socially mad, if you will, but not in the eyes of the law of unsound mind. Look at his letters on business, how good many of them were! Oh, I think Sir George was well advised not to contest the will!"

"Well, I don't agree with you. It's not too late even yet, and if Sir George cares to make an effort to get Royston into his

hand, I, for one, will not prevent him. I like to see a man get his rights."

"Take my advice, and don't put him up to such a step."

"Oh, of course not! Well, I'm not going to waste the whole morning here. You write to the Squire, and tell him that that diary, and all the rest of it, is only a cock-and-bull story."

"Still, that diary of Hawtrey is curious," mused Mr. Linton.

"Humbug! that's what it is! If there was a second will, who in the name of mischief has got it? Well, I'm off. Halloa! here's the midday post!"

Mr. Linton being the business man of the firm, the letters addressed to the partners were always brought to him first for perusal. A clerk now entered, and laid a large bundle upon his writing-table. Mr. Linton opened them one after the other, and rapidly scanned their contents with the keen eye of one accustomed to correspondence.

"Anything of importance?" asked the senior partner, sauntering towards the door.

“No, nothing as yet,” said Mr. Linton, opening a large envelope.

“Well, I’m off to Cleeford; I shall be back about five,” and Mr. Jackson approached the door, when his progress was interrupted by an exclamation from Mr. Linton. He turned round, and saw his partner pale and interested, and evidently under the influence of a new emotion.

“What’s the matter—anything serious?” asked Mr. Jackson.

“Very serious; read that.” And Mr. Linton handed over to his partner a letter. It ran as follows:—

“St. Mary’s Mission, Hoxton,  
“Feast of the Nativity.

“GENTLEMEN,—I beg to enclose you a paper that was drawn up by me at the request of one Dawson, formerly in your employ, who died on Saturday last at St. Mary’s Hospital, Shoreditch, from the effects of the terrible injuries he sustained when crossing the line at Broad Street Station, by an engine knocking him down and crushing both his legs. He lingered

two days and two nights, and on his recovering consciousness, a few hours before his death, sent for me to administer the consolations of the Church. It was during that time that the enclosed document was drawn up. It relates to an act of fraud committed by Dawson in suppressing a will, made by the late Mr. Richard Barillon, of Royston, on his deathbed. I may add that Dawson was in full possession of his senses during the whole time I was with him, and dictated his evidence to me most clearly and coherently.

“ I am, Gentlemen,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ MICHAEL O’ROURKE, S.J.

“ Priest of St. Mary’s Mission.

“ Messrs. Jackson and Linton.”

“ Good heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Jackson, gravely. “ Where is the will; has it been destroyed?”

“ No,” said Mr. Linton, rising from his chair and putting down a document which he had been attentively scanning; “ I have been looking at the contents of the paper

forwarded by the priest, and I see that the will is said to be hidden in our strong-room. Let us come downstairs, and see whether it is there or no."

"In our strong-room?"

"Yes, come along — you can read that paper later—I have the key."

And the partners descended to the cellar of the house, which was used as the strong-room, where all the important deeds and papers belonging to clients were preserved.

"It says in that paper upstairs," remarked Mr. Linton, as the partners entered the strong-room, a low-roofed cellar, lighted by a grated window paned with ribbed glass, and full of large tin boxes standing one upon the other, "that the will is beneath a broken slab, under the box labelled 'Charitable Trusts, Copley School.'" And he pointed to a large japan case, on which several other cases were piled.

"We must get a couple of the clerks to help us to remove them," said Mr. Jackson. "Here, Sharp! Bird!" cried he, going to the door of the strong-room and calling up the staircase.

Two young clerks promptly descended.

“ Remove those boxes on the top of Copley School,” said Mr. Jackson.

In some seven or eight minutes, and with considerable noise, the order was obeyed.

“ Thank ye. You may go upstairs again.”  
And the clerks departed.

“ Now, to remove the case!” said Mr. Jackson, stooping down and lifting with both arms the Copley School box from the stone floor, and placing it in an adjoining corner.

“ The flagstone beneath *is* broken,” said Mr. Linton, kneeling on the dusty spot from which the tin box had just been removed, “ and sure enough here is the document!” And he held up a piece of blue paper, folded up and discoloured with dust and age.

Mr. Jackson hastily snatched it from his hand, opened it, glanced at its contents, and then said—

“ Yes, it is a will; no mistaking the late Squire’s handwriting. Listen!

“ This is the last will and testament of

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me, Richard Pembroke Barillon, of Royston, Dartvennis, in the county of Limeshire, Esquire, being weak in health, but of a sound and disposing mind—I give, devise, and bequeath unto my dear brother, Sir George Barillon, K.C.B., now Governor of the Cochineal Islands in the South Pacific (from whom I have been so long estranged), his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns for ever, all and every my real and personal property of every description whatsoever and wheresoever, whether in possession, reversion, remainder or expectancy which I may be possessed of or entitled to at the time of my decease. And I do hereby appoint Thomas Owen Jackson, Esquire, attorney-at-law, of Dartvennis, in the said county of Limeshire, and Sir George Barillon, aforesaid, to be the executors of this my will, hereby revoking all former wills. In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand the twenty-sixth day of October one thousand eight hundred and

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“ RICHARD PEMBROKE BARILLON.

“ Signed by the testator, Richard Pem-

broke Barillon, as and for his last will and testament, in the presence of us, who, in his presence, at his request and in the presence of each other, all being present at the same time, have hereunto set our names as witnesses.

“ ALEXANDER HAWTREY,

“ Royston, Dartvennis, Limeshire,

“ HENRY DAWSON,

“ 14, Orchard Street, Dartvennis, Limeshire.”

“ Let me look at it,” said Mr. Linton.

“ Oh, there can be no doubt about its being in the Squire’s writing,” said Mr. Jackson, handing the document to his partner.

Mr. Linton examined it, and then folded it up thoughtfully.

“ Yes,” said he, “ there can be no doubt about its being a valid will. How do the Squire and Sir George get on together?” asked he, after a pause.

“ Oh, very well, I believe; at least I have never heard anything to the contrary. Of course the Squire will contest it.”

me, Richard Pembroke Barillon, of Royston, Dartvennis, in the county of Limeshire, Esquire, being weak in health, but of a sound and disposing mind—I give, devise, and bequeath unto my dear brother, Sir George Barillon, K.C.B., now Governor of the Cochineal Islands in the South Pacific (from whom I have been so long estranged), his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns for ever, all and every my real and personal property of every description whatsoever and wheresoever, whether in possession, reversion, remainder or expectancy which I may be possessed of or entitled to at the time of my decease. And I do hereby appoint Thomas Owen Jackson, Esquire, attorney-at-law, of Dartvennis, in the said county of Limeshire, and Sir George Barillon, aforesaid, to be the executors of this my will, hereby revoking all former wills. In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand the twenty-sixth day of October one thousand eight hundred and

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“ RICHARD PEMBROKE BARILLON.

“ Signed by the testator, Richard Pem-

Barillon's state of mind was a whit less lucid when he made the second will than when he made the first? On the contrary, if it is a question of sanity or insanity, it seems to me that there is a deal more insanity in the first will, which leaves Royston to a comparative stranger, than there is in the second, which leaves it to the brother, as if in a moment of lucid repentance for the wrongs the testator conceived he had done him. Of course, if the Squire does contest the validity of the document, he is not likely to entrust the case into our hands, you being one of the executors under the will; but still if he asks my opinion I shall advise him to withdraw amicably from the property, and shall use my efforts to arrange in his interest all matters as regards compensation. I should think Sir George would not press the Squire unduly; for now I remember, Mr. Barillon on coming into Royston gave Sir George of his own free will twenty thousand pounds out of the sixty thousand pounds he inherited. It was a graceful act of generosity which ought, in the present state of affairs,

to be put down considerably on the credit side to Mr. Barillon."

"Oh, I am sure Sir George will act generously, but what I fear is, that the Squire will not submit to be ousted without making a fight for possession," said Mr. Jackson. "You see the place by the first will is entailed on his son, and by to-day's *Times* I find that Mrs. Arthur has presented, at Cannes, a boy to the world. Perhaps the Squire may think it his duty to contest the will for the sake of his son's interest."

"Of course," smiled Mr. Linton, "if the Squire has a foot to stand upon, he would be bound to contest the will; but it can be no use to institute proceedings simply to stultify oneself. If you could prove the second will to be a forgery, well and good, but such a step, as every one would see who is in the slightest degree acquainted with the late man's handwriting, is an impossibility. Then, as to insanity, I am sure no counsel, when the facts were put before him, would give his opinion that the first will which we drew up was a whit

more sane than the second, which the late Squire drew up himself! Oh, there is not a shred of a case to go into court! It is a caution to us, after the lesson we have learnt from that scoundrel Dawson, to be very careful about ever bringing up a young man in the firm with the idea of becoming a junior partner again."

"Let us go upstairs and look at his confession. Gad, what a blow it will be to the Squire! and so proud as he was, too, of Royston!" ejaculated Mr. Jackson.

"We must write to-night both to him and to Sir George," said Mr. Linton; "it's fortunate that they are both in the same place."

"Yes, the Squire talks about that fellow Hawtrey getting rapidly better. When he recovers he might throw additional light on the matter. We had better send Dawson's confession to Riesenheim, and it might be as well to have Hawtrey's signature attached to it."

"Well, there is no necessity for it," said Mr. Linton, carelessly; "but it can do no harm, and might facilitate, perhaps, matters

in the Probate Court. However, that is a very secondary consideration. The great fact is that we have here a second will, which, of course, must render the first will void, and of none effect." And, locking the door, they ascended the staircase.

When they had entered Mr. Linton's room, that gentleman sat down in his chair, put himself into a listening attitude, and handed over Dawson's statement to Mr. Jackson.

"Your eyes are better than mine, Jackson," said he; "you read it."

"Of course they are," replied Mr. Jackson, contemptuously, while unfolding the document, "and your eyes wouldn't be so bad if you didn't keep on using all those beastly lotions and things. Why, they're enough to blind Argus himself! Why don't you eat and drink like a man, and take lots of exercise? Gad, I'd cure you at the end of a month if you'd only let me prescribe for you!"

"Kill me, you mean," coughed Mr. Linton. "But never mind me. Read on."

And Mr. Jackson read the following:—

“MY CONFESSION,

“*To be sent to Messrs. Jackson and Linton, of Dartvennis, after my death.*

“In the autumn of 18— I was articled clerk to Messrs. Jackson and Linton, the leading firm of attorneys in Dartvennis, in Limeshire. My employers were the legal advisers of the late Squire Barillon, of Royston, who was nicknamed ‘Mad Dick,’ on account of his various eccentricities. One October, the year after I was out of my articles, and expecting every month to be taken into the business of the firm as a junior partner, a messenger came down from Royston saying that the Squire wanted to see me. It so happened that Mr. Jackson was then in Canada, on some business connected with the Montreal and Ontario railways, and, as fortune would have it, that Mr. Linton was in London engaged in an important case in Chancery, connected with the winding up of the Dartvennis and Mostyn Slate Quarries Company. I was, therefore, the only attorney of the

firm, and full powers had been entrusted to me to undertake any business that might fall into its hands during the absence of the partners: if anything very important occurred, Mr. Linton was to be telegraphed for. Accordingly, I went up to the Hall, and desired to see the Squire. He was very pale and ill, and was in bed.

“‘ You are a lawyer?’ said he to me.

“‘ I am sir,’ replied I.

“ He paused for a moment, and then desired his servant to quit the room. When we were alone, he said, ‘ Mr. Jackson has a former will of mine, made six years ago: I wish to see it. Will you get it for me?’

“ I replied that I would, as I knew that it was in the strong-room of the firm, along with the other papers belonging to the Squire.

“‘ I wish to cancel that will, and have drawn up a fresh one myself. Just look at it, and see that it is in proper form.’ And he handed me a small piece of paper.

“ I looked at the will, and though it was not a perfect specimen of conveyancing,

I saw at once that it was a valid document. In it the Squire devised the whole of the property to his brother, Sir George Barillon, then Governor of the Cochineal Islands.

“‘It is not drawn up precisely as a lawyer would have drawn it up, sir,’ said I; ‘but for all practical purposes it is as good a will as need ever be made.’

“‘That will do then,’ replied the Squire; ‘and now be good enough to get me my former will. When you return I shall wish you and Mr. Hawtrey, my secretary, to witness my signature to this will,’ and he pointed to the paper I had just examined.

“I complied with his request, and went at once to my office, where, opening the long tin box which contained the Squire’s papers, I discovered the will. It was a proper document, legally drawn up, devising Royston to the Squire’s cousin, a Mr. Geoffrey Barillon, and making various small bequests. Among these bequests was the sum of five thousand pounds to Alexander Hawtrey.

“I returned to the Hall, and again had

an interview with the Squire. In the room was Hawtrey.

“‘ You have the will?’ asked the Squire.

“‘ Yes, sir,’ and I handed him the document I had brought with me.

“ He took it, and read it over carefully. When he had finished his perusal, he turned to Hawtrey and me, and said—

“‘ I wish both you gentlemen to witness my signature.”

“ Hawtrey came forward to the bed-side.

“‘ I hope, Squire,’ said he, ‘ that you have not forgotten my services?’

“‘ What do you mean by forgotten?’ asked the Squire, testily.

“‘ In the will you made when first I came to you you were good enough to leave me a legacy of five thousand pounds. I hope you will be equally kind to me on this occasion,’ replied he, fawningly.

“ The Squire looked at Hawtrey keenly for a moment, and then took up the old will and ran his eye through its various provisions.

“‘ Yes,’ said he, ‘ I see you are right;’ and then he paused for awhile. Suddenly

he lifted up his eyes towards us, and said rather angrily, 'What a nuisance both Jackson and Linton should be away just when I want them. Give me a pen and yonder inkstand.'

"I brought him what he required, and he then placed his hand upon the will he had himself drawn up, and signed it before us.

"'Now you attest my signature,' said he to me.

"I did as he requested.

"'And now, Hawtrey, I want your signature too,' said he, turning to his secretary.

"Hawtrey took up the pen, and whilst doing so, said, 'I hope you will not forget me, sir. Should anything happen to you I shall be left penniless in the world, unless you befriend me.'

"'Sign!' said the old man, imperiously. Hawtrey obeyed. The Squire then took up the paper and read it through with an air of satisfaction. 'I have done justice at last,' he murmured.

"'May I hope, sir, that justice will also

be done to me?' asked Hawtrey again. 'I have served you well and faithfully. Besides, there are others to whom you have promised bequests, whose names are omitted.'

"'Silence, sir; leave me alone! I can do and *shall* do as I please. Quit the room, and leave me with Mr. Dawson.'

"It was not without good ground that the squire was called 'Mad Dick,' for he would often turn upon the man he had hated for years and then suddenly befriend him, or else he would cruelly ill-use one whom he had always professed to like, without rhyme or reason. I had heard it currently reported in Dartvennis that Royston was to descend to Mr. Geoffrey Barillon, to the exclusion of Sir George, between whom and the squire there had been a long and deadly estrangement; and now here he was leaving the property to the very man whom he had sworn to disinherit, and whose name he had always loathed.

"'Mr. Dawson,' said the squire, in a whisper to me, as Hawtrey was turning

towards the door, 'you take this will and make a copy of it, and look over it more carefully at your leisure, to see that the wording is correct; bring it to me to-morrow morning, for perhaps I shall put in a codicil or two.'

"As he handed me his last will, he asked, 'You write to your employers in their absence?'

"'Every day,' replied I.

"'Then have the goodness to let Mr. Linton know what I have done by to-night's post,' said the squire.

"'Certainly, sir,' said I.

"There was a pause for a minute, during which the squire looked stern and thoughtful.

"'Do you wish to keep your former will?' said I, at last breaking the silence; 'or shall I—'

"'Yes; I *shall* keep it,' said the old man, savagely and in a loud voice. 'I shall read it again, and then keep it for Mr. Linton to destroy.'

"And he clutched the will fiercely, as if he feared that I should rob him of it.

For a moment he gazed at me fixedly, and then all of a sudden his head fell back, and without a moan or cry he died : the heart had given way. He had been ailing about a fortnight.

"I gave a slight scream, and Hawtrey, who was about to leave the room, turned quickly round, saw the expression on my face, and then rushed to the bedside. A smile of triumph passed over his lips as he saw his former master dead, and with the old will firmly grasped in his hand. I hastened to the door.

"'What are you going to do?' asked he, seizing me by the arm.

"'To summon the servants, and send for the doctor,' replied I.

"'He's dead,' said Hawtrey, coolly ; 'of what use is the doctor? Besides, you and I, Dawson, have a little business to do together first.' And he locked the room.

"Hawtrey and I were no strangers to each other. There wasn't a tavern in Dartvennis where we were not well known ; but we were prudent and kept our habits

secret. I knew him to be a scheming, unscrupulous fellow; and I fear me, at that time I was not a whit better. We both were keenly interested in racing matters, and often found ourselves in great straits from the losses our frequent betting and gambling, at a club called the 'New Tats,' entailed upon us.

"'What business is it you mean?' asked I.

"'That will,' said he, 'is known only to you and me, for it was only this morning that the squire made up his mind to execute it, and he has seen no one save us two. I can vouch for that: I know his mode of conducting business well enough. It is all the parson Askew's doing: ever since the squire has been taken ill he's been here, advising him to leave the place to Sir George; and it was only last night that I heard the squire bawl out angrily to the parson, that he should make no other will, but that matters should remain as he always intended them. And, just like him, this very morning of course he complies with the wishes of Askew, but at the same

time gives strict orders both to me and to the servants not to admit the parson on any account. Askew called twice this morning, but of course was denied admittance. No one, I can swear, knows of the existence of that will, or even of the Squire's intentions, but you and I. Neither of us you know, Dawson, is very strict about points of honour ; let us come to terms.'

"Briefly, the terms were that I should hand over the second will for destruction, and receive 1000*l.* out of the 5000*l.* left by the first will to Hawtrey, as soon as the money came into his possession. I was in debt, fond of loose living, and in short the temptation was too strong for me. I acceded, after a slight hesitation, to his proposal ; but knowing the character of the man whom I had to deal with, I thought I would be clever, and so declined to destroy the will till the 1000*l.* due to me should be paid up. Fool that I was, I thought that I should thus have a check upon Hawtrey ! I placed the will in the strong-room of the firm, beneath a broken stone slab, under a box labelled

‘Charitable Trusts, Copley School. *There it will be found now.*

“On the false will being proved, Hawtrey declined to pay me a single farthing of the sum agreed upon, but coolly repudiated the whole bargain.

“I threatened that unless he fulfilled his share of the agreement I would immediately place the real will before my employers.

“He laughed, and said, ‘Do it if you like; but your confession will lead as much to your ruin as to mine. If you want to get struck off the rolls, you are quite at liberty to expose the will—and yourself.’

“He was right. I had never thought he would have backed out of his bargain, and was not prepared for this piece of counter-villany. For a moment I was doubtful what to do. It was in my power to render justice to the late squire’s brother, and to restore him to the property; but only at the sacrifice of my own reputation, and even personal safety.

“The law is never gentle to professional men who fraudulently abuse the trust reposed in them. After consideration, I

had not the courage to suffer for the wrong that I had done. There was therefore no alternative but to be silent, and to be cheated by Hawtrey. I resolved, however, not tamely to submit. I told him that the first time I met him out of doors, I would horsewhip him within an inch of his life: I kept my word. We met by accident in the market-place: I had been drinking, as usual, and my rage was uncontrolled by reason. I rushed upon my brother accomplice, seized him by the throat, and gave him as sound a thrashing as he ever received in his life. Some people tried to rescue him, and the police interfered; but, mad with rage, I attacked everybody, and a regular brawl ensued. The affair created considerable scandal in the town. I was summoned before the Bench, my case was strongly commented on, and I was heavily fined. It was now that my employers informed me that, after such improper conduct, and also having heard since this *fracas* much to my disadvantage in connexion with various gambling proceedings which had taken place in the town, it was impossible

for them to keep me in their business, and that before I left they wished to go over the books, as I had charge of the money relating to foreclosure accounts.

"Now it had so happened that some days before my dismissal I had received 700*l.* from a client to place in the hands of the firm for investment on mortgage. Relying on my getting very shortly the money from Hawtrey, I had only paid into the county bank 500*l.* out of 700*l.*, intending to refund the difference as soon as I received my 1000*l.* On the word of a dying man, I swear I did not intend to embezzle this sum ; but I had pressing debts, and I thought that to advance to myself a little money from a client's deposit for a short while, was not such a very great crime, after all. My employers, however, when I was forced to explain the matter, looked most gravely upon what they called my *theft*. Theft it was, pure and simple, in their eyes, for when they asked me from whom I shortly expected to get money, I made my case worse by a story full of blunders and confusion. It was only to

avoid discrediting their firm, they said, that they did not hand me over to the law. My father, who was manager of a small manufactory in Lancashire, paid up the sum, and I was summarily dismissed, Messrs. Jackson and Linton assuring me that if ever they heard that I was trying to get a place in a solicitor's firm, they would think it their duty to give my true character to my new employers.

“ Meanwhile the will was in the strong-room: but it had been impossible for me to regain possession of it. When Hawtrey refused to pay me the 1000*l.*, I had intended destroying the document; but I required a convenient opportunity to do so. To remove all the boxes and to get at the loose slab, would be a work of time as well as noisy; and as I knew that the will was perfectly safe where it was concealed, I did not then trouble myself about the matter; the first occasion that I had to go into the strong-room would answer my purpose very well.

“ In the ordinary course of things, an opportunity would have soon offered itself

had I not been summarily dismissed. As it was I did my best to attain my object. The key of the strong-room was kept by Mr. Linton, and on finding that my dismissal was unavoidable, I asked him for it, saying that I wished to place some documents in the room before I quitted his employ, but he replied that there was no necessity for my troubling myself in the matter, and that he would himself put the documents back in their place. I tried then to secure the key surreptitiously, but failed. I had therefore to leave the precious will behind me. It did not, however, trouble me much, for I had not told Hawtrey where I had deposited it, and I knew that unless the place was pulled down, and the flooring taken up, there was no chance of it ever being discovered. Nor did I bother myself about the possibility of Hawtrey becoming repentant and confessing, for unless he knew where the will was, and could produce it, of what use was his confession? Indeed, I think Hawtrey was under the impression that the document had already been destroyed. In after

life I have often thought that I would write the whole circumstances of the case to Messrs. Jackson and Linton, and let full justice be done to Sir George Barillon, but I have never had the courage. I never saw Hawtrey again after I left Dartvennis, or heard of him. No one, I may add, has ever had a suspicion of the second will. Mr. Askew, the clergyman, on the death of the last squire, wished to know why I had been sent for, and I replied to let Mr. Barillon have a look at the will he made some years ago.

“ ‘ He expressed no wish to alter any of its clauses in favour of his brother?’ asked the clergyman.

“ ‘ No wish,’ said I; ‘ he died with the will in his hand, and seemed perfectly satisfied with its contents.’

“ ‘ It is as I feared,’ muttered Mr. Askew. ‘ I did my best that justice should be done to Sir George, but, alas! in vain,’ and he turned away.

“ Such is my confession. Of my after-life I need say nothing here. I gave up the law, for which I never had a taste, and

tried my hand at many things, all of which failed. My father refused to see me, my other relatives followed his example, and I was thrown on the world alone. I emigrated to the Cape, but could do no good. I tried Australia and New Zealand, with a similar result. At the end of three years I returned to England, when I succeeded in picking up a subsistence by my pen, as a penny-a-liner and sporting tout. Had it not been for my passion for drink, I might have done better than I have done. I am told that I am as good as a dead man. Well! life has not had so many charms for me that I need much regret shuffling off its mortal coil. May my past be forgiven, and may Holy Mother Church absolve me! It is never too late to mend, and I have done my act of justice at last."





## CHAPTER VII.

HAWTREY.

**S**OME three weeks after the discovery of the will, Sir George Barillon and his cousin were seated, engaged in earnest conversation, in the library of Professor Stüttmacher, a large square room, filled everywhere with books and pamphlets, which seemed to pour down from the heavily laden shelves and tables, and make little literary reservoirs for themselves in every corner and crevice. It was evident, from the faces of the cousins, that there was something important on hand. The squire looked very grave, and there was a decided Quarter-Session expression in the light of his eyes, and in the corners of his mouth.

Sir George sat back in his chair, pulling his moustache and imperial, and now and then nodding his head in approval, as his cousin spoke in low tones to him.

The door opened, and in walked Dr. Stüttmacher.

“Mr. Hawtrey will be with you in a quarter of an hour, gentlemen!” said he, gravely.

“He is perfectly capable to answer questions?” asked Sir George.

“Oh, perfectly; he is quite restored, as regards his mental state; physically, he is still weak.”

“We don’t care about his physical state,” muttered the squire, “we are not going to thrash him!”

“You seem to take a very kindly interest in this fellow?” asked Sir George of the Professor.

“He was alone, and unbefriended,” replied the Professor, sitting down, “and his pitiable condition did appeal to me. As your Waller does say ‘he was wan and meagre, with a pity-moving face.’ Besides, he was to me useful, and, as says

the Rochefoucauld, 'we pardon much to those who are to us useful.'

"You know Hawtrey's history?" asked the squire, gruffly, and stopping in his pacing up and down the room.

"He did tell me that he had been unfortunate in gambling, when I began to employ him, but that he was for the past very sorry. Still," sighed the Professor, "I did not know he was so bad as you now do tell me. He promised his habit of drinking to abandon, and said he was repentant, but he did not keep his word. Your Hudibras is right—'repentance is a sneaking knave, but amendment is an honest fellow.' Hawtrey, or rather, Otway, for I did not know his name was Hawtrey, pretended repentance, but he did not try amendment."

"You never knew then, Doctor," said the squire, sitting down, "that he was the illegitimate son of a dissipated baronet, who gave his mother a pittance, and on her death, which happened soon after Hawtrey left Christ Church, where he had been a servitor, took no further notice of

his offspring? As matters have turned out I think he was right!" ejaculated the squire, parenthetically.

"No; I did never know this," said the Doctor. "I knew he had been to Oxford, for I soon did find out that he was a man of education. Were it not for this deadly drink, he might have made a mark in the world!"

"How did Richard get hold of him?" asked Sir George of his cousin.

"You know how fond your brother was of messing about with old documents, and all that kind of thing?" answered the squire. "Well, he advertised, it seems, in the *Athenæum*, for an amanuensis, and among the replies he got was one from Hawtrey. I suppose he thought Hawtrey the best of the lot, and so closed with him, and afterwards made him a kind of secretary. He remained at Royston till Richard's death, as we all too well know, and, indeed, might have stayed on there when I came into the place, for I made him my steward, had he only behaved himself."

"He did not behave himself then with you?" asked Dr. Stüttmacher.

"I should think not, indeed, nor with any one else, it appears!" growled the Squire. "He did me the honour, it seems, to aspire to Miss Barillon's hand, and persecuted her on every occasion with his attentions. My daughter, very foolishly, and out of mistaken kindness to the fellow, did not at once tell me of the honour he wished to do my house, for fear of getting him dismissed, as she knew that he was alone and friendless in the world. I saw very little of Hawtrey at that time, and knowing that he was clever, left much in his hands, and he, it appears, chose his opportunities when I was absent to make love to my child. To do the fellow justice, I believe he was then genuinely attached to her, though, no doubt, as we see from his diary, the thought that she might have a good fortune, heightened, to a certain extent, his passion. But about this time I heard reports of Hawtrey very little to his credit—that he was fond of haunting taverns, of gambling, and the like pursuits, which rendered it very undesirable his being

my steward any longer. I was on the point of giving him his *congé*, when my daughter came to me and told me how he had persecuted her with his attentions, and how she had just escaped from his insolence. This insolence being nothing less than an offer from Master Hawtrey, who was very much in his cups—for in his senses he would have been more cautious—of marriage—a runaway marriage, if I remember rightly. You can imagine that the day did not wane *many* hours before Hawtrey was turned neck-and-crop out of the place."

"And you heard nothing more of him till he turned up here?" asked Sir George.

"Oh, yes I did, though. For a time he skulked about Dartvennis, and wrote a piteous letter to Muriel, imploring her pardon, which I answered sharp enough, and gave him to understand, that if he were found within the precincts of Royston it would be the worse for him. Then he went to London, and I heard nothing of him for some months, till he wrote me a very proper letter, earnestly begging

my pardon for the past, and saying how bitterly he regretted his conduct toward Miss Barillon. He then said that he had made the acquaintance of a corn-merchant in the City, a Mr. Stephen, with whom he knew that I had had transactions, and wanted to know whether I would recommend him, as he thought he saw his way to make very good capital out of the 5000*l.* he had inherited.

“He had inherited, indeed!” broke in Sir George.

“Well, like the Doctor, I mistook re-pentance for amendment, and wrote to Stephen, stating fully Hawtrey’s history, and putting it to him whether he thought he could employ him. Stephen, however, it seems, had taken a fancy to the fellow, and resolved to give him a trial. For a time all went well, and then, so Stephen told me, Hawtrey began to neglect his work, took to drinking again, and mixed himself up with a lot of men who did nothing but gamble and bet. At last the end came: Stephen desired Hawtrey to quit the firm, and we soon afterwards

heard that he had lost every penny of his 5000*l.*—his 5000*l.*, George—in cards and racing. That's all I know of the fellow, till he turned up here."

"Then I must have his acquaintance made about the very time he did lose that money," said the Doctor. "He was working in the Reading Room of your British Museum, as what you call a literary hack, when he was to me pointed out as an able man. He did tell me that he had just lost all his money, and was well nigh destitute. I was then collating Greek MSS. for my work on the Pauline Epistles, and I did find Hawtrey so useful that I did keep him ever since with me. But latterly his fine intellect has so made a wreck of itself—*ah, quantum mutatus ab illo!*—that he could me no longer help, and so, not wishing to him turn adrift, I did keep him as tutor for those pupils—like Mr. Mowbray—who knew not sufficient German to learn without English aid, the language."

"And what are you going to do with him now?" asked the Squire.

"Oh, I have nothing more to do with him. I have promised him some little money for him to go to the Brazils, where, he says, he does know a contractor of railways, a friend of his—*Arcades ambo*, I fear!—who will take him as a clerk. But I do not think he will ever do good. He does lack a proper government over himself; as says your Shakspeare, 'Tis government that makes men seem divine; the want thereof makes them abominable;' and Hawtrey has that want, I do fear."

"And he is really restored to perfect sanity?" asked Sir George.

"Oh, quite."

"Why has he suddenly come round to say that he will see us, and answer our questions?" asked the Squire.

"Because I did say that unless he did make a frank breast of the past, I would give him no money for Brazil."

Just then a knock at the door was heard, and Hawtrey entered.

He looked very pale, and one could see by the cold air with which he bowed

to the cousins, that he was doing all in his power to conquer his agitation. He smiled slightly upon the Professor, and then sat down.

“ You are acquainted with our object in wishing to see you ? ” asked Sir George, curtly.

“ I am.”

“ And you are willing to corroborate, by your testimony, the evidence we have received ? ”

“ Perfectly. I have no intention of ever returning to England, so my evidence cannot render me amenable to the law.”

“ You were the private secretary of the late Mr. Richard Barillon for some years ? ”

“ For the seven years preceding his death.”

“ You were cognizant of the fact that the late Mr. Barillon had made a will soon after coming into his property, leaving Royston to his cousin, Mr. Geoffrey Barillon, to the exclusion of his brother, Sir George, then in the Cochineal Islands ? ”

“I was.”

“And by a codicil in that will you were left the sum of 5000*l.*? ”

“Yes.”

“Were you acquainted with one Henry Dawson ? ”

“Yes: he and I were at one time on friendly terms together.”

“On friendly terms together,” repeated Sir George. “You are aware that Dawson was knocked down by a train a few weeks ago, and conveyed to the hospital, where he died from the injuries he sustained, a few days after his admission ? ”

Hawtrey bowed assent.

“Are you aware that on his death-bed he made an important confession respecting an act in which you were concerned ? ”

“Yes: I have heard that much from Dr. Stüttmacher,” answered Hawtrey.

“You can form some idea of that confession and that statement ? ”

“I can form the most accurate idea,” replied Hawtrey, half smiling.

“Is it true,” asked Sir George, sternly, “that my brother on his death-bed made

a second will which cancelled all the provisions contained in the former one, and left the property of Royston wholly and entirely to me?"

"It is so."

"And you suppressed that will?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"Because the late Squire had forgotten to insert the 5000*l.* he had formerly promised me, and died before such insertion could be made," replied Hawtrey, sullenly.

"You are here in a foreign country, Mr. Hawtrey," said Sir George, sternly, "and therefore not amenable to English law, but your moral sense cannot be so wholly perverted as not to see the enormity of the act you have committed. You have kept me from my property for years, and have led Mr. Barillon here to imagine himself to be the proprietor of Royston, when he has never had the slightest claim to it."

"The scoundrel!" growled Mr. Barillon, very audibly.

“And yet,” said Hawtrey quickly, and turning to the Squire, “one of my reasons for committing that act was that it would benefit you and yours.”

“And pray what had you to do with me in the matter?” asked the Squire, haughtily.

“I loved your daughter,” said Hawtrey sullenly; “even you——”

“Have the goodness not to let Miss Barillon’s name be mentioned in this affair!” said the Squire in his haughtiest tones.

“Then I am to understand,” said Sir George, coldly, “that you have no objection to put your name to Dawson’s confession for the purpose of corroborating his testimony?”

“Not the slightest. I am about to expatriate myself, and if you think it necessary that my name should be attached, well and good.”

“It is not necessary, but I wish it for my own personal satisfaction,” replied Sir George, handing him the document, which Hawtrey signed at once.

“ You were with my brother daily during the period of his illness ?”

“ I was ; every day, almost every hour I was at his side.”

“ We know that,” replied the Squire, significantly.

“ Pray, how do you know it ? Dawson says nothing of the kind ?” asked Hawtrey.

“ Are you acquainted with this handwriting ?” asked the Squire, pulling out of his pocket the leaves from the diary that had been forwarded him. “ You may take it ; the papers belong to you.”

Hawtrey took the papers, looked over them, and said, “ It is a copy from certain pages in my old diary. How did you come by them ? I thought I had destroyed them. It only shows the madness of ever keeping a diary !”

The Squire briefly explained.

“ I know I was making a list of the coins at the time of the Squire’s death in a new diary, which I had not yet begun to fill with personal matters, for I had hopes that the collection would be left me. I must, therefore, have put these

loose leaves, which I had torn out of my old diary as they were too dangerous to be preserved, into the pocket of the new diary, intending to destroy them when the facts there recorded were sufficiently remembered by me, and then forgotten that I had so secreted them. I was under the impression, though, that I had destroyed them at a later period."

"But how did your diary come among my papers?" asked the Squire.

"Miss Barillon was very much interested in the coins at Royston, and I lent her the diary which had the list of them, never imagining, you may be sure, that its pocket contained those precious leaves! Soon afterwards I received my *congé* from you and never got my book back again. No doubt, owing to the events that occurred, Miss Barillon forgot all about its existence, and I did not think it of sufficient importance to trouble her to return it to me; the Barillon papers being in the same chest with the coins, my diary, I suppose, got into the hands of my successor at Royston, and was placed in the chest."

"Yes, I think I remember now," said the Squire, "that once when taking out the cases of coins to show to a local dealer, the diary slipped from them. I took it up, glanced hastily at it, and saw that nothing was written in it (for your list was written at the wrong end of the diary). I imagined it, therefore, to be a new diary book belonging to my late cousin, and so let it remain amongst his papers."

"I asked you," began Sir George, "whether you saw a good deal of my brother at the time of his illness."

"Yes, daily; in fact, I may almost say I was hourly with him."

"Do you think his leaving me the property was quite a sudden thought—a freak of impulse which, had he lived longer, he would have as suddenly repented of?"

"I thought so at the time, but on mature reflection I began to be of opinion that his cancelling the first will was no sudden freak, but a sound and genuine action," replied Hawtrey.

"Let me ask you what made you arrive at that conclusion? I have no one but

you to ask for an account of my brother's last moments," added Sir George, half apologetically.

"I will answer you," replied Hawtrey, slowly. "Shortly after his illness began to be serious it seemed to me that the late Squire, though getting physically weaker every day, was becoming on the other hand mentally stronger and clearer. He would lay for hours quite silent, as if rapt in reflection, and then mutter frequently to himself "Delusions! all delusions!"

"Oh!" said Sir George, interested.

"I need not tell you, though I believe the fact was unknown to all but to you and to me, that your brother was subject to delusions concerning you."

"He spoke to you concerning them?" asked Sir George.

"He told me frequently, when in his confidential moods, that he had been engaged to a Miss Tremayne, and that you had poisoned her, and that you entertained the same designs upon his life in order to get the property, and that was

the reason why he refused ever to see you when in England, or to have anything to do with you."

"I never knew anything of this, George. Richard never hinted such a thing to me. Is it true?" asked the Squire of his cousin.

"Quite true. It is an old story; I never thought it worthy of mention. Richard was attached to a Miss Tremayne, who lived in the neighbourhood of Royston, and as luck would have it I also paid her attention. Unfortunately she died rather suddenly, of heart disease, if I remember rightly, and nothing would convince Richard but that, jealous of the preference she showed to him (which, by the way, was not true, for I was the favoured one), I had deliberately poisoned her. With the secrecy of insanity he kept the fact to himself, but from this moment I date the origin of his bitter hatred to me. Afterwards he extended the idea, and became a victim of the fixed delusion that I intended to poison him in order to come into the property. Hence we never met,

or took any notice of each other ; and when I was appointed to the Cochineal Islands I intended to live and die there, and therefore took but scant interest in Royston."

"I had no idea of all that," said the Squire, astonished. "Why, if you had contested the will under which I inherited and mentioned the existence of such a delusion the Court would have upset it to a certainty."

"Perhaps—but I did not know that Richard had mentioned the existence of this delusion to any one. I know he had not to the lawyers or to Askew, and therefore thought that no one could corroborate my statement. Besides, as you know, I soon abandoned the idea of coming to England to institute a lawsuit."

"It was my daily fear that such an event would occur, and thus render my fraudulent act, not only a crime, but a blunder," said Hawtrey.

Sir George took no notice of this observation.

"When my brother mentioned my name in connexion with Miss Tremayne's death,

and also as intending to poison him, you of course saw at once that he was labouring under a delusion, and not in his right senses?"

"Of course."

"Did he often allude to the subject, or was it only occasionally mentioned?"

"He frequently spoke of it, and especially during the few months before his death."

"May I ask," said Sir George, regarding Hawtrey keenly, "what course you pursued when these delusions were topics of discussion? Did you attempt to convince him of their falseness, and try to let him think rationally on the subject?"

A pause, during which Hawtrey looked down and traced the patterns on the carpet with his foot.

"Shall I repeat my question?" said Sir George.

"Well, I will answer you," replied Hawtrey, quickly; "one confession more or less will make but little difference in your estimate of my character. It was not my object, Sir George, to see you at Royston. I wished the father of Miss Barillon to be the owner

of its land and—I encouraged the late Squire in his delusions."

"Do you mean to say," said Sir George, regarding Hawtrey with horror, "that you let him believe I poisoned Miss Tre-mayne, and had the same designs on his own life?"

"I do!" answered Hawtrey, curtly.

There was a pause for a few moments.

"You say that my brother during his illness muttered something about 'delusions! delusions!' Did he die believing in the existence of those delusions?"

"I believe not. He struggled with them and gradually seemed to become convinced that he had judged you wrongfully, and it was then that he began to take a sudden dislike to me. I sometimes think that he knew I had encouraged him in his hatred to you for malicious motives of my own, and that it was for that reason he did not mention my name in his will. Mr. Askew did you more harm than good, for had he not taken your part so strongly I believe the will would have been made in your favour earlier. The late Squire hated the clergy,

and he no doubt thought that if he made a will in your favour it would be said that he was under the parson's thumb. Though he told Mr. Askew that you would *not* inherit Royston, still, I felt sure that he intended to make a will in your favour."

"What made you feel sure?"

"Because I had endeavoured more than once to revive his hatred of you by mentioning the delusions under which he laboured, but at last, the day or two before he died, he burst out with, 'You lie! you lie! George is as good as gold! It is I that should be forgiven! I that should be forgiven!' and those words he repeated, more to himself than to me, over and over again. I tried to calm him, but I was ordered out of the room. I saw him in the evening of that day: he was still cold to me, but spoke about several matters connected with the property. He made no further mention of your name, nor did he hint to me his intention of making another will. But still, I feel sure that his suspicions concerning you had vanished and that he disliked me for having encouraged them. I believe now that one

of the chief reasons for asking me to witness his signature was to prove to me that he was no longer a victim to his former impressions against you. Save to you and to me I am convinced he never mentioned the nature of his delusions. He died, having been harsher and colder to me for the three days previous to his death than I had ever known him before. For though variable to others he had ever been a friend to me."

"I wonder he never wrote to me if his feelings had changed towards me," mused Sir George.

"He may have intended to do so, only his sudden death prevented him," suggested Hawtrey.

"I have done with you," said Sir George, rising. "Your conduct proves you to be one of those men who do not even rise to the level of our contempt. Your base return for all my brother's kindness to you and your infamous conduct towards me make you the most pitiful scoundrel that I have ever met or heard of."

"You do not shame feel, it appears to me, for your conduct," said the Professor

mildly addressing Hawtrey, who had listened to Sir George's words, with an air of perhaps assumed indifference.

"Shame!" said Hawtrey, bitterly. "Why should I feel it? I am accustomed to shame —am I not the child of it?" And without another word he walked out of the room.

A few words to link the chain of events. The Squire on receiving intelligence respecting the second will had fully entered into the matter both with his lawyers and with Sir George. The only course for him to adopt was very clear. He had never felt that he had a moral right to Royston, he now saw that he had not even a legal right. He wrote a statement of the case to Arthur Barillon and at once set about to make all the compensation in his power to Sir George. But the kindly ex-governor took the most lenient view of matters and acted as generously as it was possible for him under the circumstances.

All that Sir George regretted was, that owing to Royston being so encumbered with mortgages and with other little mat-

ters which tended greatly to impoverish the estate, he was unable to refund his cousin the 20,000*l.* he had received some few years ago or in any way to befriend him as he would have liked. Indeed, Sir George thought that it would be necessary for him to let the place and live quietly abroad for a time till matters had so far settled themselves as to allow him to live in comfort in the home of his ancestors. However, he did not trouble his wife with this view of the case until he felt that such a step would be absolutely necessary. Lady Barillon was so enchanted with her change of fortune and so certain that her future progeny would be a son and heir, that it was a pity to blight in any way (especially in her situation) her ecstatic happiness.

On hearing how Hawtrey had been connected in this fraudulent affair, Sir George was desirous of asking him a few questions, not so much to corroborate the testimony of Dawson, for the existence of the will spoke for itself, as to acquire a little information concerning his brother's last moments. Accordingly, he called on Dr. Stüttmacher,

and informed him of everything concerning Hawtrey. The Professor said Hawtrey was now all but cured, and assured Sir George that he would use his influence to make him answer all that was required. At the end of a week after Sir George's request Hawtrey was dismissed from the Asylum. Alone and friendless, the good-natured Professor took him into his own house and befriended him. It was now that Hawtrey was informed of the confession of Dawson. At first he denied the existence of the whole affair, but finding that facts were too strong for him he began little by little to confirm the truth of his former accomplice's statement. Still nothing would induce him to see either Mr. Barillon or Sir George. He positively refused to say a word to either of them. Nearly a fortnight elapsed before he consented to make a frank confession. The Professor was under the impression that his offer of money (which by the way he was to be refunded by Sir George) for the passage to the Brazils was the chief means of making Hawtrey alter his decision. But another agent had been at work.

It so happened that Muriel had met

the poor lost man wandering moodily by the Adle, doubtless thinking of that new world he was soon to see, for the Professor had told him that after the *exposé* of his past conduct he could no longer be in his employ. Muriel at once came up to him, for Hawtrey seeing her, was about to hasten away like a cowed animal, and spoke not harshly but frankly to him of the awful sin he had committed. For some quarter of an hour a conversation ensued between the two, the details of which never transpired, and when it was concluded, Hawtrey had risen for the moment a better man, and had promised to reveal all he knew. Hard and unrepentant, as it was feared he still was, I doubt whether he would have parted with the copy of the "Christian Year," sent him by Muriel, the day after this conversation had taken place, for anything that the world could offer.

Whilst these matters were proceeding they were watched with considerable interest by one, who, though a silent spectator, was by no means an inattentive one. Andrew Lambert, who had been passing his vacation amid the

Italian lakes, had promised Mr. Barillon to take Riesenheim on his way home, and to see what progress his suit was likely to make. On his arrival at the little watering place, he had done all in his power to ingratiate himself with Muriel. He behaved very well, and acted so plausibly that that young lady, though far from feeling in the slightest degree any real interest in him, began to think him improved, and was more gracious to him at Riesenheim than she had been at Dartvennis. Her father, highly pleased at this, began to form favourable opinions as to her future, and to hope that all that nonsense about young Mowbray had been properly expelled from her head and heart.

But the Squire was grievously mistaken. Muriel was as constant as ever to the memory of Kit, and not a week passed that she did not communicate with Rosa and got all the news about him she could. She thought it, however, prudent to keep this little matter secret, and Mr. Barillon, acting under the impression that out of sight was out of mind, ceased now to trouble himself at all about Mowbray's

affection for his daughter. "Lambert has the field to himself," he muttered, "and if he plays his cards well will win the day." And he was playing his cards well. Ceasing the *rôle* of the ardent swain, Lambert was content now with acting the part of a friend, and it was for this reason that Muriel was gracious and friendly to him. She felt grateful to him for having at last rightly interpreted her feelings, and acknowledging the fact that anything like love was out of the question between them. The consequence was that believing in his friendship she politely reciprocated his feelings, and the intercourse that now took place between the two was of so kindly a nature that it might have perhaps deceived a careless spectator.

And now it was that he heard of the existence of the second will. As soon as Mr. Barillon had become aware of the fact, and that the matter was beyond the region of dispute, he at once informed Lambert of his sudden reverse of fortune. Lambert was profuse in his sympathies, most sincerely deplored the event, and was con-

ventionally condoling. But not the less did he regard the matter from his own point of view. He resolved to be on his guard.

For Muriel personally, and for her own intrinsic worth, he had always cared but little. It was as the daughter of one of the leading men in the county, who bore a family name second to none in the ranks of the Limeshire squirearchy, that Lambert had paid his attentions to her. As Miss Barillon of Royston she was a woman who as his wife would undoubtedly add to his position. He knew that she was beautiful and generally admired, and that satisfied his vanity, but more than all beside he valued her for the social advantages that her name and lineage possessed in Limeshire. The Barillons had been rooted in the county for centuries, and the most inquisitive genealogist would find no flaw in the stock. The present Squire, though he had inherited by an accident, was a lineal descendant of the family, and a man highly thought of in the county. He might not have so much wealth as certain

people gave him credit for, but Andrew Lambert did not care for money, his father had amply enough of that *irritamenta malorum*.

Decidedly a marriage between the grandson of a factory hand and the daughter of a family whose ancestors had been Squires of Dartvennis ever since the days of the Edwards, was a consummation in his eyes most devoutly to be wished. These were the reasons which had actuated him in his suit.

But suddenly now all had changed. Miss Barillon, the daughter of the Squire of Royston, and Miss Barillon, the daughter of a small gentleman farmer in Norfolk, were two very different personages. It was not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Andrew Lambert now found his business duties at home so pressing that it was absolutely impossible for him to remain away any longer. "I can do better than that," muttered he to himself as he took his ticket for Cologne. "Gad, what an escape I've had! Suppose she had accepted me when first I proposed, I should have

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been obliged to have thrown her over! And that would have looked so cursedly mean. I hate meanness. I should think our lively friend Mowbray would take the hint by this time. He'll cry off, I'll be bound! By Jove, what an escape! What an awful let off!"





## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GRANGE.

**A** MONTH after the events related in the last chapter, two persons were seated on a rustic bench, in front of a farm-house with low gabled roof, watching the October sunset tinging the mellowed scenery with its cold bright sheen. It was the close of a beautiful afternoon, and the view that lay before them was one familiar to many a yeoman: meadows filled with grazing kine, or penned-up sheep; clear well-kept ditches, intersecting breadths of land, now no longer verdant, but brown and fertilizing; here a holding, fresh from the labours of the plough, and breathing forth the scent of newly turned earth; there a vast enclosure, still stiff with the stubble of autumn; away in the distance, woods, silver sown with frost, shedding quickly their

russet leaves that tinkled as they fell, covert of many a wily cock and suspicious hare ; whilst away in the distance, dotted here and there with hut-like haystacks or silent windmills, hill and dale rises trim and riven ready for the seed.

“ How well the country looks, Muriel ! now in this sunset. There is a beauty about the fall of autumn which even summer does not possess. Nature is like a woman : she never tries to please so much as when her charms are on the wane.”

“ Then I must be on the wane, papa,” said Muriel, smiling ; “ for I have no other happiness than to try and please you.”

“ My darling !” said her father, bending down and kissing her, “ I really believe you do not regret the change at all—in fact I think you are happier at the Grange than at Royston.”

“ And are you as unhappy as you anticipated ?” asked Muriel, nestling her head against her father’s breast. “ You thought at first that the change from the position of a great squire to that of a small gentleman farmer would be almost intolerable ;

but has it proved so? If I have ever been sad at our altered circumstances, it has been only because I feared the change might tell on you. But I am now sad no longer, for I see that you are reconciled; nay happy—is it not so, papa dear?"

"Yes, darling, it is so!" replied Mr. Barillon, smiling. "No man of course can fall from fortune to poverty without pretending not to feel the change, and the blow was, as you know, at the time a rather smart one. But then upon reflection, I generally became consoled. By the laws of moral right I was not entitled to Royston, and I was never quite reconciled to the idea of possessing the place to the exclusion of the man who should have been the heir. But of course when the property was left me, I was bound to accept it in the absence of all opposition, and therefore having lived there some years, and having done everything in my power to beautify it, to have to quit the place just as I was beginning to enjoy the fruits of my labours, was naturally a very severe disappointment. But it is so no longer, Muriel dear. The

expenses of Royston were very heavy during the last few years and caused me considerable anxiety. No, no!" said he, rising from the bench, "after all, I am no worse off than I was before. My ownership of Royston has been a pleasant episode, and it has ended honourably and amicably. Here I am in my old home where you were born, my pet, where your dear mother lived and which she consecrated by her death, and where passed days always happy. Since I have been here, old memories come back upon me, old associations soften me with their influence, and I feel—God knows I say it in all humility—a better man. The change from here to Royston made me calculating and selfish, and whatever it does for other men, the acquisition of sudden wealth was not a blessing to me. Why, my pet," said Mr. Barillon, bending affectionately over her, "I was actually beginning to feel hard about you, and wanted to sacrifice your happiness to a contemptible fellow, simply because he was wealthy—the snob!" violently exclaimed Mr. Barillon.

"You allude to Mr. Lambert, I suppose?"

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said Muriel, half-smiling, “but I thought he was a favourite of yours?”

“Favourite indeed!” snarled Mr. Barillon. “Because I wanted him to marry you I did my best to make myself blind to his faults and to see him in the light I wished him to appear in, but at heart I always disliked the fellow. Yes, my darling, I feel now utterly ashamed when I think of the mercenary way in which I carved out to my own satisfaction your future. Gad, I believe I should have approved of your marriage with any one—good, bad, or indifferent—provided the man was wealthy! Ah! money is a harsh master, and beneath its golden yoke dignity, honour, and even affection have often to bow down and bite the dust. Forgive me, my pet,” and he sat again beside her and took her hand in his, “for I have not acted well towards you.”

“Oh, papa darling,” said Muriel, pressing her father’s hand, whilst she kissed him affectionately, “let the dead Past bury its dead, and let us once more be all in all together as we were in the dear old days when we were not rich! Now that I am

no longer the daughter of the wealthy squire of Royston, but of the simple Mr. Barillon of the Grange, you must put all your ambitious thoughts about me in your pocket. It is very fortunate that I was never very mundane about such matters, else the falling from my high state might make me very discontented and unhappy."

"Ah, well," said the Squire, "come and let us take a turn round the lawn—it's chilly sitting here! Besides, I have something to tell you."

"Something to tell me?" asked Muriel, drawing on her gauntlet gloves.

"Do you remember my sending you to Cromer a little time ago?"

"Of course I do—why, it's not a fortnight ago!" replied Muriel, taking her father's arm and walking on to the lawn.

"Well, during your absence a very important visit was paid me—by whom do you think?"

"Oh, I cannot guess; it might be from so many people," answered Muriel.

"From a friend of yours—young Mowbray!"

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"From Mr. Mowbray!" repeated Muriel, in astonishment; "you never told me of this?"

"No, my pet, because I had a surprise for you. Well, you must know that just before I left Royston your admirer called upon me, repeated the 'old, old story' again of how much he was attached to you, and wished to know whether I was still of the same opinion respecting a marriage between you two as I had always been——"

"And what did you reply?" asked Muriel, eagerly, and with flushed face.

"Well, I said that I saw nothing to justify me in changing my mind; but he is a difficult man to take no for an answer, this young Mr. Mowbray! and he pleaded so well that I replied I would consider the matter at my leisure——"

"And have you considered?" asked Muriel.

"Listen—don't be so impatient! Well, then the Dean called on me privately and backed up his boy's suit. We had a long talk together and we began to think that a union between you two was not such an

utter impossibility after all. However, I said I would give no definite answer at present, and desired that neither the Dean nor his son would re-open the matter with you. Well, since I came here, I have had frequent letters from the Dean, and it was only yesterday that we decided upon the course we ought both of us to adopt in the interests of our children——”

“And that course is——?” broke in Muriel.

“That you may consider yourselves as engaged,” answered Mr. Barillon, bending down and kissing his daughter. “We have decided that both of you be engaged for two years, and during that time have frequent opportunities of meeting so as to be thoroughly well acquainted with each other. Then if at the end of these two years you are both still of the same mind and have the fullest faith that the happiness of both of you depends upon your union—well then, in God’s name, let marriage unite you!”

“But papa, darling, I can hardly believe all this!” said Muriel, radiantly; “it seems like a dream! Oh, how I have hoped and

hoped that this would take place ! And now I can hardly realize it !”

“ It is a reality, my pet, I can assure you,” said Mr. Barillon, smiling. “ It will be a sad day to me when I lose you, but I suppose I must make up my mind to that event sooner or later, eh ? Well, then, let it be my consolation to feel that I have given you into the hands of one in whom I can fully trust, and whose object in life will be to make you a happy woman.”

“ And you feel all this about Mr. Mowbray ? ” asked Muriel, her eyes filling with tears of pleasure.

“ I do. He has acted throughout in the affair as a thorough gentleman should. All that I heard about him was so much to his credit that I could not but have a sincere respect and esteem for him. But as I wished to know a little more of him personally, I thought I would avail myself of the opportunity of your being at Cromer, to ask him down here for a few days.”

“ And has Mr. Kit borne the test well ? ” asked Muriel, jestingly.

“ Very well. He’s a capital fellow. We

must write to Salamis to push him on. A friend at Court is always useful."

"Talking about writing, there is nothing to prevent my writing by to-night's post to—Kit?"

"There is nothing to prevent you, my darling," said Mr. Barillon, gaily, "doing everything which an engaged young lady should do. Go in and write at once, for I am sure you'll have a letter from him to-morrow. I shall go over the farm to see how that new steam-plough works which Sir George sent me. How well the old timbered house looks in the sunset, Muriel. Nothing like it in Limeshire, eh?"

"Yes," muttered Mr. Barillon to himself, as he wended his way to the farm. "I'm sure it's for the best. Money is not everything; as long as two young people of equal position and proper character are really attached to each other, and have a comfortable sufficiency to begin life upon, no father would be right in raising any objection. Between the Dean and myself we ought to be able to start the young couple decently enough. Besides, young Mowbray seems to

be doing well, and perhaps a hint to Salamis might advance his interests still further. Gad ! what a contrast there has been between my future son-in-law and that self-seeking puppy Lambert ! What a young blackguard that fellow showed himself ! What a young blackguard ! He has taught me a lesson I shall not soon forget ! And the worst is I deserved it too ! How fortunate Muriel never took a fancy to him ! And she showed her taste too. Ah, there's the plough puffing away ! ”

Mr. Barillon had some grounds for not thinking very highly of our friend Andrew Lambert. On the Squire's hasty return from Riesenheim, in order to wind up his affairs previous to resuming the tenantry of his old farm in Norfolk, not a few visits were paid him by the different squirearchy around, who deeply regretted his departure from the neighbourhood. Young Lambert was amongst the very last who called. Mr. Barillon was delighted to see him, and indeed, now more than ever, felt the desirability of Muriel becoming Mrs. Andrew Lambert. If he had wished her to marry

money before, how much more did he wish it now that he was lord only of a few acres! But young Lambert was not of the same opinion. There had been a little talk about the matter in his own household. Old Mr. Lambert advised his son "to stick to the girl; the connexion is good enough, and she'll have you fast enough now, I'll be bound. Gals like her hold their heads high, but the moment misfortune touches them they are submissive enough; you may take your oath of that! I'll make it all right as regards the brass, Andrew." But Mrs. Lambert was not at all of the same mind as her lord and master.

"Lor, George, how you do talk! Why, she's only a sort of farmer's daughter! Andrew mustn't sacrifice himself for a mere sentiment. He can do better than marry Miss Barillon, especially as she hasn't treated him over well in the past. I want for my daughter-in-law a reg'lar county girl and no mistake. Let Andrew marry one of the De Greys of Cleve, or the Ashleighs of Popham Court, or the Burys of the Ness, or one of that class. He'll

have the cash, and he needn't lack sweethearts amongst the well-born, I'm sure. Why, men poorer than Andrew, and whose money stinks quite as much of the shop as ours, have married the daughters of peers of the rellum before now! Why mayn't he have the same luck, I should like to know? But as for paying court to this Miss Barillon, *now*—oh, ridiculous! I always did think her a pert and haughty-about-nothing Miss!" To his mother's way of thinking did the son now incline, and so when Mr. Barillon received him very graciously, and mindful of past conversations, wherein he had offered to use his paternal offices with Muriel, to insure the suitor's ultimate success, hoped that he would soon pay them a visit at the Grange, the young man had replied, in his stiffest tones—

" You are very good; but I am so much engaged that it is impossible, I fear."

" Well, then," said Mr. Barillon, smiling, " when you will not be so much engaged—say at Christmas, I can offer you some fair shooting."

" I am afraid that my business will give

me very little leisure for visiting," replied Lambert, coldly. "If I am ever in your part of the world I shall be charmed to renew my acquaintance with you. Pray give my kind regards to Miss Barillon. I'm sorry that she is away," for Muriel was then on a visit to her aunt's. And he was about to withdraw.

"So, so, Mr. Lambert," said Mr. Barillon, "I think I can understand. My change of fortune seems to have had a very speedy effect upon the ardour of your affection. I thought, sir, you did me the honour to profess to be attached to my daughter?"

"It is better, Squire—I beg pardon, I mean Mr. Barillon—that that subject should not be introduced again between us," replied Lambert, in his supercilious way; "Miss Barillon once refused my hand—a step which, I have no doubt," and he smiled a little triumphantly, "she now bitterly regrets—and permit me frankly to assure you that I have no further intention of sacrificing my future by pursuing what has hitherto been an unsuccessful suit."

"And yet, sir," replied Mr. Barillon,

angrily, "it is not a month ago that you told me to my face that you loved my daughter so ardently, that your happiness was so bound up with her, that——"

"*Then* you were the Squire of Royston!" broke in Lambert, coolly.

"I understand," said Mr. Barillon, rising; "you need not trouble yourself about visiting us at the Grange. Whatever I may have thought of you personally, I at least believed in your sincerity. Quit my house!"

"And yet, Squire, I am only actuated by the same motives as you would be had the circumstances been reversed," replied Lambert.

"What do you mean, sir? Is this another of your insults?"

"No insult at all—at least I mean it as none. Let me explain. Why did you encourage me in paying my attentions to your daughter? Simply because I was rich. Had I been poor would you have permitted me to aspire to her hand? But I need not ask you questions—your refusal to all Mr. Mowbray's pretensions, whose only fault is that he is poor, is a sufficient answer. You

see that I can stand up for a rival now that I am about to quit the field! Suppose our positions were reversed—I pray you hear me out—suppose that your daughter had loved me, and you had consented to our union, and suppose I had suddenly been ruined, would you have held by your consent or would you not have found a reason to break off the engagement? Certainly the latter. Why, therefore, blame me for doing now what you would have done? I am but a man of the world, cold and calculating as yourself, and I only act as any man of the world, who was cold and calculating, would under the circumstances. Besides, I am not even sure that Miss Barillon would accept me. She prefers Mowbray, I am certain of that. No, no, Squire, according to my views——”

“I have nothing, sir, to do with you or your views,” broke in Mr. Barillon. “Have the goodness to leave me!”

“And yet my views are but a reflection of your own,” sneered Lambert. “You further my suit with your daughter because I have money, and for that reason alone.

I wish to marry your daughter because she holds a good position in the county, and for that reason alone. She has now—excuse my frankness—no position ; why, therefore, should I pursue a suit which probably may be hopeless, and which certainly can be of no advantage to myself ? The thing is absurd !”

“ Mr. Lambert, unless you quit instantly this house you will find that I am not yet too old to give you the thrashing you merit !” And there was a paleness about the Squire’s face and a strange light in his eyes which made Mr. Andrew Lambert deem it prudent to beat a hasty retreat.

“ And this is what comes of trying to sell one’s child !” sighed the quondam Squire when alone.

Certainly he had no reason to think of the name of Lambert with affection. And yet in spite of himself he felt that there was in the fellow’s impudent argument a little more truth than he cared to acknowledge. More than once, as he reflected upon this interview, did he sigh, “ And this is what comes of trying to sell one’s child !”

There were few who knew Kit Mowbray at this time that did not confess that his lines had fallen in very pleasant places. He had a most enviable post in his office ; he was on the best of terms with his Chief ; his name, not only through the *Censor*, but through one or two other literary channels, was becoming gradually familiar to the public ; and last, but by no means least, it had been his good fortune to be engaged to the girl of all others he had wished to win as his wife. There was an amount of cumulative prosperity in all this which might well tend to make a young man content with himself and the world around him. And Kit's manner and personal appearance now certainly did reflect that air of supreme satisfaction which successful men not infrequently carry about with them.

What Mr. Barillon had told his daughter really now took place. All the objections which had formerly been raised to a union were withdrawn, and the farmer of the Grange gradually became as much delighted at the prospect of the match as the Squire of Royston had been opposed to it. I need

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hardly say that the household at the Deanery were equally charmed. Two stipulations, however, had been insisted upon by Mr. Barillon. The one that the lovers should be engaged for a certain time, in order to have ample opportunities for the analysis of each other's character and dispositions, so as to avoid (what I am given to understand occasionally happens), being *désillusionné* after marriage; and the other that no union should take place until Kit was in the receipt of a sufficient income to justify such a step. Both these conditions Kit as well as the Dean fully agreed to—considering them only such as every father anxious for the future happiness of his daughter ought to insist upon.

“I am no advocate, Mr. Dean, for short engagements,” said Mr. Barillon, as the two sat talking together upon this very subject in the library at the Deanery, whither Mr. Barillon and his daughter had been invited to spend Christmas. “I know I am unfashionable in that respect, but marriage is not a partnership to be entered into hastily. I ascribe the numerous unhappy marri-

ages we see around us at the present day solely to the fact of short engagements. A young man meets a young woman constantly out in society, is her frequent partner at balls, takes her down to dinner, is her companion at picnics and garden parties and the like, is fascinated with her, proposes, is accepted, and at the end of six weeks marries, to find, perhaps, the awful difference between the fascinating girl he has known only as a brilliant social atom and the wife who is bored with the monotony of domesticity. No, no ; let people have, as Kit and Muriel are having, plenty of opportunities for discovering the direction of each other's tastes, the compatibility of each other's dispositions, and how they are calculated to pull together in double harness, and we shall then hear less of wives who have found their husbands brutes, and of husbands who have been disappointed in their wives."

"I quite agree with you," answered the Dean. "The only test by which a man should estimate the woman he wishes to become his wife is by the standard of domestic, and not of social, life. The

charms of companionship—the very essence of matrimony—do not mean merely the parade of showy accomplishments, as so many young people imagine, but something sounder and more solid, and that requires time to find out. I myself was engaged nearly two years, and it was because I saw Mrs. Mowbray in her own house, a dutiful, practical, and obedient daughter, that I thought, when transplanted to my hearth, she would make an equally good wife, and I am happy to say I have never had occasion to regret my choice for one moment."

"I am sure you have not. I only hope that Kit and Muriel will be equally fortunate," said Mr. Barillon, politely.

"And why should they not? With God's blessing, I see nothing but happiness in store for them. Kit is devotedly attached to her, and I know enough of my boy to say that he will make a kind and affectionate husband. And as for Muriel, why, we all love her already as a daughter, and feel confident that she will be everything a true wife ought to be. I wish the prospects of

every one meditating marriage were likely to be as bright and happy."

"I wrote to Salamis privately a few days ago, telling him of this engagement, and asked him to advance Kit if it were in his power. He replied there was nothing he should like better, but that at present there were so few appointments to be had. That's just like Salamis, he never binds himself to anything, and always, when you expect he has forgotten all about you, agreeably surprises you by the very thing you desired! I shouldn't wonder—for Muriel is a great favourite of his—if he turned out a good friend to Kit!"

"He always has been, I am sure," said the Dean. "Nothing could be kinder than Lord Salamis has shown himself."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Mr. Barillon. "But what's the use of a friend at Court unless he helps you? Salamis, through his late wife, is a near connexion of mine, and I am sure, under the circumstances, would be glad to oblige me, if he could—and he can if he chooses," laughed Mr. Barillon, "in spite of all this Radical outcry; for the

days of patronage, though on the wane, are not yet extinct. Kit's private secretaryship is a good thing ; but then if Salamis goes out of office—and the last elections have gone against the Government—why our young friend loses his extra 300*l.* a year, and has to fall back upon his junior examinership."

" Ah ! but then you are forgetting his connexion with the *Censor*. He is making quite an income by his articles. I had no idea that newspaper work was so remunerative," said the Dean.

" Yes, yes ; but when he is married he wont find time for all that kind of thing. I want him to devote his leisure to his wife, and not to be at his office all day, and then come home only to set to work again. I would rather have him suffer in his income than do that. I know a charming girl married to a rising barrister, and the complaint of her life is that she hardly ever sees her husband, as he is in Court all day and studying his briefs all the evening. I don't want Muriel to live like that—a married woman expects, and ought to have, proper

attention paid her by her husband. Time spent in cultivating domestic love is never wasted. Ah, here are the lovers!" And Kit and Muriel, who had been wandering over the Tor Moor, lost for the last two hours to everything which did not directly concern the kindly circle of themselves, entered the house.





## CHAPTER IX.

FINIS.

**N**OW there was one person among the Mowbray connexion who strongly disapproved of this engagement, and that was the Colonel. That distinguished personage felt he had been guilty of overestimating the tact and talents of his nephew, for no one, he thought, with proper ideas upon the social fitness of things could ever make such a muff of himself as Kit was now doing. He felt as much hurt as if a personal injury had been done to himself.

“What do you gain by this marriage?” he asked his nephew, testily. “Gad! I should like to know what you consider you gain by it.”

“The woman I love,” answered Kit; “and most fortunate I am in winning her.”

"The woman you love!" said the Colonel, contemptuously. "What do you know of love? That's the way with all you impulsive young fellows. You lose your heart all of a sudden, as if it was a thing of no value (and you're right there!), and then, cursing all consequences, marry you must, as if your mistress were the only woman in the world. Love, indeed! Just answer me this: Do the marriages based upon what you call love turn out the best in the long run? I can tell you for a fact, and my experience is less limited than your own, that they do not. Is it not notorious that half the divorced people in the kingdom at the present moment married for what you would call love? No, no; marriage demands something deeper and more solid for its basis than that transient sentiment, often the offspring of mere ignorance and vanity, which you young men term love!"

"And what is the basis you recommend?" asked Kit.

"For a man in your position matrimony

can have but one basis—money. You have no claims which entitle you to expect the combination of birth, beauty, and fortune; but you might reasonably expect to do what so many social paupers before you have done—marry a woman whose handsome portion would render you independent of anxiety, and greatly advance your interests in life. And let me tell you this," said the old *militaire*, earnestly; "it is all very well to rail at *mariages de convenance*, but my experience tells me that they are often the happiest in the long run. I could give you hundreds of instances of men who have married solely for money, and who, when they begin to fully realize the comforts and advantages of wealth, have ended by deeply loving their wives, gratefully loving them too. And I could tell you of others who have married for what they think affection and on that only, and before the year is out are the most miserable of men, for they have learnt the bitter truth that they have made an irreparable mistake, and that

anxiety and social annihilation stare them in the face."

"Well, my dear uncle," said Kit, smiling, "it is no use trying to dissuade me from the step I am about to take. I consider myself the happiest of men, and so with a good grace be polite enough to congratulate me."

"I cannot do that, my boy—I cannot do that! I had expected better things of you, Kit—better things!"

"No, no, uncle; I wont permit you to say that. I cannot allow you to disparage my suit in this manner: it is a reflection on Miss Barillon. Come, shake hands and congratulate me!"

"Well, lad," said his uncle, extending his hand, "when love's in reason's out, so I suppose I must congratulate you, for it's no use, I fear, arguing the matter with you. I only hope you will not ask me one day to condole with you."

"Oh, no fear of that," laughed Kit.

"And when do you intend to get married?" asked the Colonel, drily.

"Well, we are to be engaged for two years."

"Why so long as that?"

"Mr. Barillon wishes it, in order that we should both have opportunities of knowing each other thoroughly."

"What nonsense! As if people who knew each other thoroughly ever *would* marry! That's a kind of knowledge you only obtain when you *are* married, and then it is not always an agreeable discovery. Well, and when this psychological study has been satisfactorily accomplished, you are to get married?"

"I hope so." And then the Colonel plied his nephew with question after question, as to what Mr. Barillon could settle on his daughter, what the Dean would settle on his son, what immediate prospect there was of Kit's advancement in the Board, and other queries of a like practical nature.

To these the anticipatory Benedict replied that Mr. Barillon hoped at the end of the period of the engagement, and provided certain improvements he was about to in-

Introduce at the Grange turned out well, to settle on his daughter some three hundred a year (what a face the Colonel made!), that the Dean had offered to do the same for his son, and that Mr. Barillon was sanguine as to Lord Salamis doing his best to obtain Kit a better appointment.

"And this is to be the end of a young fellow whom I have tried to form!" mused the Colonel, as he wended his way to the Rosicrucian. "Well, I *am* disappointed. Thank heavens, sentiment never had anything to do with my marriage, and I have yet to learn that it has been unhappy! Poor Kit! what a future of domestic worries and social mortifications he is building up for himself! Well, I have advised him to the best of my ability ever since I took him in hand, and if a young fellow chooses to go to the deuce with his eyes open, it's his own fault if he complains of the atmosphere when he gets there. They say he knows his own mind—bah! as if there ever was a young man who didn't say he knew his own mind; and self-knowledge, too, the most difficult of

all things to acquire ! And so they'll *fête* him and marry him amid drums and trumpets, will they ? Bah, it's like having festivities at a funeral !"

But Kit did not regard his future as likely to be painted *en noir*. If there is one time in the life of man more happy than another it is perhaps when, beneath the two powerful incentives of Love and Ambition, he is doing his best to achieve success, and finds that his labours are beginning to have a result. And now it was so with Kit. Supremely happy in the woman of his choice, he saw, from the very day that he had been permitted to engage himself, how much was dependent upon his own exertions, and accordingly more resolutely than ever he put his shoulder to the official wheel. His name was already a household word in the department for duty and diligence. Lord Salamis had the fullest confidence in him, and more than once privately told Mr. Lechmere that he never had a secretary who gave him less trouble, and at the same time relieved him from more unnecessary labour.

The fact was that Kit had foresight enough to avail himself to the full of the advantages he now enjoyed. As private secretary, no little responsibility occasionally devolved upon him, especially when Parliament was up and Lord Salamis yachting in the Mediterranean, out of the region of telegrams. In all his duties he had ample opportunities for the display, not only of ability, but of that qualification which, because so rare, we call on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, common sense. He had not infrequently, and on his own account, to settle difficulties with tact and caution, to answer complicated queries, and to act with responsibility. It required no slight cleverness on these occasions to steer his course so as to avoid the Scylla, on the one hand, of trespassing upon his Chief's prerogatives, and the Charybdis, on the other, of official blundering. But as yet his bark had deftly escaped all dangers, and without the slightest suspicion of grounding.

A little of this skill was, however, partly due to the advice of others. Desirous of

not troubling Lord Salamis about small matters (for nothing his Chief hated more than “being bothered”), and at the same time fearful of committing some *faux pas*, Kit was constantly putting himself in communication, as the season advanced, and business became more pressing, with the different heads of departments, and thus gradually laid the foundation of a knowledge which could only be acquired by holding an administrative position. It was careful and anxious work, but he felt that if performed without a *fiasco* it would entitle him to be enrolled amongst the ambitious ones of the Board who, despising humdrum promotion, were intent only after the prize of the office.

Lord Salamis had taken the earliest opportunity of congratulating Kit upon his engagement, and of speaking in the highest terms of Muriel. “I have heard from Mr. Barillon,” said he, smiling pleasantly, “the history of your wooing, and I am sure I sincerely wish you both every happiness. Muriel is a charming girl, and I think you have every reason to thank Fortune for

smiling on your suit. Mr. Barillon has asked me if it is possible to advance your interests in the office, and both he and you may rest assured that if it comes within my power I shall not fail to do so."

And there the matter ended, no further allusions being made by the statesman to the subject. At the same time Kit received a very cordial letter from Arthur Barillon, wishing him every happiness, and expressing his gladness that his sister should be united to one who so fully appreciated her. It wound up by saying that as the climate of England had never agreed with him, and that as it was now somewhat necessary for him to put his brains into the market, he had accepted an educational post at Bombay, where he was to instil the classics and English literature into the minds of Hindoos, Mussulmans, and Parsees, for the sum of eleven hundred pounds a year and a residence. He begged Kit to write to him, and to keep him posted up in the proceedings of the Charity Scrutiny Society.

And so the months passed on.

I have said that the Board of Conven-

tions was unlike the generality of our public offices, where promotion rises in a groove, and where the highest appointments—*pour encourager les autres*—are bestowed on outsiders. At the Board promotion did not entirely depend upon deaths or superannuation, but in some measure upon superior ability, and in a great measure upon interest.

When Lord Salamis said that if Kit chose to work he could offer him a fair career, he was alluding to the various posts attached to the Board, which, though in his gift, were not necessarily given in the office. To a man who deserved success, and who had direct influence with the head of the department, there was but little doubt of his being sooner or later taken out of the purely official ranks of the establishment, and popped into a berth well worth the accepting.

Before Lord Salamis's time, the different Lords President had never scrupled about appointing some young favourite to one of these posts, whether he displayed extra ability or not. Lord Salamis had, however,

set his face against the system. It was necessary for the preservation of political influence that many of the better appointments, both at home and abroad, which belonged to the Board, should be given to outsiders as party prizes, but at the same time his Lordship resolved that the officials of the department should have a chance of obtaining some of these extra pickings whenever they proved themselves, by superior talent or business capacity, worthy of the distinction. Hence it was that amongst Kit's colleagues there were men working as steadily for the same end, and as keenly anxious to stand well with their Chief as himself. Favouritism had given place to natural selection.

Now there were certain appointments attached to the several embassies and missions abroad called Inspectorships of Protocols, which were entirely in the patronage of the Lord President of the Board of Conventions and much coveted by both officials and outsiders. The pay was good, the work agreeable, and the responsibilities light. Consequently when vacancies occurred there

was no lack of applicants. No sooner was the death of one of these Inspectors announced in the *Times*, or a resignation made known, than letters poured in upon Lord Salamis from men of all classes—from barristers who found briefs conspicuous by their absence, from military men tired of half-pay and of being secretaries to clubs and City companies, from Queen's messengers who wanted to marry and settle down, from eminent literary men who had, according to their critics, written themselves out, from Irish members who had been disappointed of colonial governorships—in fact, from everybody on the look-out for preferment.

Towards these appointments Kit turned a longing gaze, and Scrope had often strongly advised him to get his name put down at once for one of them, but somehow or other my hero felt shy about asking. Besides, he thought it better to leave the matter entirely in the hands of his Chief without any prompting on his part. Lord Salamis was not a man who needed being reminded. One morning, it was in the middle of

February, Scrope came into his room and said—

“I say, Mowbray, now is your chance. I have just heard that Chichester, the Protocol Inspector at Vienna, is going to resign. Put your case before the Chief before the thing gets wind, and I should not be a bit surprised to see you have your claims allowed!”

“Oh, I don’t like to ask,” replied Kit. “One never knows how Salamis would regard such a request.”

“Well then, get Mr. Barillon to ask for you.”

“Ah! that might do, perhaps,” replied Kit.

“You see, if you want to get married by the end of this year, it’s worth making every effort to secure one of these Protocol appointments. I have always told you that your only chance of speedy promotion is by being put on the foreign establishment of the office. For the home appointments you must wait your time like the rest of us. Then you see you lack political influence, and that’s against you for a good post in the Board or for a commissionership or secretaryship

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outside Salamis's patronage. Take the last men whom the Chief has provided for at home and you will see they were all politically backed up. Upton owes his post because his father is a prominent member of the House and was beginning to be rather nasty to the Ministry, so that *entre nous* Upton's appointment was more like a sop to the Cerberus parent, than a reward for the zealous son. Then Lumley Bruce again, he owes his Consul-Generalship not so much to his own exertions, as to his uncle, who promised six votes to the Government. And so it was with Sepel Kerr and Rawlinson. Take my advice and mention the matter to Mr. Barillon at once, this will be the first vacancy among the Protocol inspectors for two years. You will have no time to lose."

"Well, I'll talk it over with Mr. Barillon this afternoon; fortunately he is up in town."

"Do! By the way, have you heard of Bateman's accident?"

"Bateman's accident! No, what is it?"

“His gun burst whilst out cover shooting, and a lot of shot went into his right eye.”

“Good heavens! is it serious?”

“Very! His wife wrote to say that Beaumont despairs of his ever being able to use the right eye again. He has got six months' leave of absence, and is off to some place near Zurich to take the eye waters there.”

“I am very sorry to hear that.” And then the two talked about other matters, for between Kit and Scrope there was at this time the closest intimacy. Indeed, it was regarded at the Deanery as a foregone conclusion, that when Mr. Scrope became assistant-secretary to the Board of Conventions, Rosa would be Mrs. Scrope.

After office hours Kit hastened to call on Mr. Barillon, who was staying at the hotel in Cork Street, about the advisability of applying for the Vienna appointment. Mr. Barillon was out on Mark Lane business, but Muriel was in and the two discussed the matter. His ladye love left it entirely in his hands to do what he thought best, but

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Kit could see plainly from the tone of her remarks that she was not anxious to quit England and leave her father, to whom she had latterly been all in all, alone in the world. As for Mr. Barillon, he at once put his veto on this idea of expatriation.

“Because my daughter marries you,” said he huffily, “I don’t see why she should exile herself from me. No, no! I look forward to seeing Muriel in her home, to have you both often down at the Grange, and if it pleases God, to be beloved by your children. What gratification would there be to me in living at the Grange when Muriel was hundreds of miles away from me and almost as much out of the region of intimacy as if she were dead. You mustn’t only think of yourself, Mowbray, but you must think of me; remember, now that Arthur is in India, I have but one child! I shall certainly *not* ask Lord Salamis for this appointment. Certainly not!” And he walked out of the room.

After this decided expression of opinion on the part of his future father-in-law, Kit never gave another thought to these Protocol

Inspectors, but earnestly hoped that soon something would turn up, for his two years of engagement were now drawing to a close, and both he and Muriel were beginning to sicken with impatience. The first year after their betrothal had passed pleasantly enough. What with incessant correspondence, frequent running down to the Grange, and Muriel being often up in town on visits, the lovers were very happy, and heard and saw a good deal of each other. But as the second year deepened the iron of a long engagement began to enter their souls, and they wearied for the time when they should be all in all to each other. They had endeavoured to persuade Mr. Barillon to curtail the two years by six months, and the Dean had made no objection, but Muriel's father, with the obstinacy of a man with a fixed idea, refused to shorten the period of probation by a day. And so time passed on.

The month of July was drawing to a close, when Lord Salamis sent his messenger across the corridor, and desired Mr. Mowbray to come to him. Kit obeyed. The statesman was seated in his cane easy-chair

smoking the cigarette that during office hours scarcely ever left his lips, and by his side was a cup of strong black coffee. On a table close to him was a bundle of papers, and on his knee an open letter.

“Sit down, Mowbray; I want to have a chat with you. How long have you been in the office?”

“A little over three years.”

“H’m! And when are you intending to get married?”

“Next September.”

“You remember I told you that Mr. Barillon had asked me to give you an appointment if one fell in my way? Well, I have not lost sight of you, but there have been others to provide for whose claims were more pressing than yours, so perhaps you may have thought I had forgotten you.”

“Oh, not at all,” broke in Kit.

“Well, I have an offer to make you, not quite so good a one as I should like, but which eventually will repay you to accept. You have heard of Bateman’s accident? Well, I have just received a letter from Mrs.

Bateman saying that her husband has completely lost the sight of his right eye, and that the inflammation is rapidly extending to the left one. He has therefore sent in his resignation, which I have accepted. I offer you his post."

"Oh, Lord Salamis——" began Kit, radiantly.

"Stop a minute," said the peer, drily. "The post I am offering you is not so valuable a one as you imagine."

"Not valuable! Why, a Keepership of Ratifications is worth twelve hundred a year to begin on!" exclaimed Kit, astonished.

"Precisely; but though it sounds like a paradox in offering you Bateman's post, I am *not* offering you a Keepership of Ratifications. You look puzzled. I will explain. When Bateman was placed here the appointment was a little cavilled at, and certain feeble economists—economy is the vice of the weak—used all their influence in the Lower House to have the number of the Keeperships of Ratifications reduced. But we were too strong for them. However, on Bateman's appointment it was

thought advisable by the Assistant-Secretaries here to enter a minute that when the post became vacant it would in future be filled up by a Deputy Keeper at a salary of eight hundred a year. That is the post I now offer you ; it is worth your acceptance. In five years' time Mr. Compton, the Senior Keeper, will resign ; he has assured me of that, and consequently you will be promoted to a Keepership. And," said Lord Salamis, smiling, "if after some eight years' service you obtain a post worth twelve hundred a year, with the prospect of one day being Senior Keeper (for you are a young man) with some two thousand a year and a residence, you cannot say you have done badly. And let me tell you, had Bateman's office *not* been reduced, I could never have dreamt of offering it to you. There are others in the office whose claims would have far outweighed yours. But as it is, it is a very proper reward for your zeal and efficiency. Of course you accept it?"

Of course he accepted it.

What more have I to relate? A few weeks after Kit had been installed in his

new office there were great doings on a certain day in the early part of September at the Grange and at the Deanery. On reference to an old file of the *Times*, I read, "On the 7th inst., at St. John's, Cromer, Christopher Mowbray, Esq., only son of the Very Rev. the Dean of Dartvennis, to Muriel, only daughter of Geoffrey Barillon, Esq., of the Grange, Cromer, Norfolk. And also on the same day, Basil Scrope, Esq., third son of Sir Hugh Scrope, Bart., of Beechwood, Hampshire, to Rosa Clairette, eldest daughter of the Very Rev. Hubert Mowbray, D.D., Dean of Dartvennis." Shortly after Kit was appointed to his Deputy Keepership, Scrope had become one of the Assistant-Secretaries to the Board, and the two young men then agreed to be married on the same day, for on Scrope's proposing to Rosa Mowbray, he was, as that young lady's friend had long foreseen, not refused. The newly-married couples spent their honeymoon by the Italian lakes, and afterwards in visiting the different cities in the north of Italy.

Of our other friends a few words will

suffice. The Dean is still at Dartvennis, and has, I see, from the pages of the *Guardian*, brought out a volume on Scripture characters. According to club gossip, there is some likelihood of Colonel Mowbray being one of the new peers. Lord Salamis, differing with his colleagues about the Bill they introduced for "The Reduction of Everything, For the Restoration of Everybody," tendered his resignation, and now lives at Florence, where he devotes himself to the education of his little daughter. A successful Colonist reigns in his stead, and matters do not work quite so smoothly at the Board as they did in the days of yore. Dr. Stüttmacher still spends his time in instructing Teutonic youth at Riesenheim; occasionally he owns he has a little itching for political writing when he reflects on the recent changes the Fatherland has undergone, but he resolutely curbs his inclinations. There is a report that the eminent Mr. Kingairloch is about to be married to the widow of a German noble—the Baroness Lippenhausen, *née* Schinkenröskop. I do not believe it, but still

stranger things have happened. Hawtrey is a member of the Argentine Republic, and has lately been undergoing a little restraint at the hands of its Government on account of certain mining frauds with which he was connected. I need hardly state that Kit and Scrope are still members of the Charity Scrutiny Society, and that their labours in the field of pauperism are as indefatigable as ever. Strange to say, the *Censor* has ceased to exist. The "Rosicrucian" found that the brilliancy of its success was, after all, only ephemeral, and that its support drew more money from the political fund of the club than was thought desirable, and accordingly it was dropped by the party. Its "plant" was bought by a few Republicans, and it has now come out as a vehement Radical organ under the title of "The Workshop."

Having been the veracious biographer of the life and doings of Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Mowbray up to the present moment, I still take a deep interest in their welfare. Whenever I wander towards the regions of South Kensington, I generally manage to

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find my way to their pretty little house, which is of course furnished in the severest Gothic, for Kit rather piques himself on what he calls Art. The last time I called the road was brusht with tan, and I found my hero pacing the dining-room in a strange fit of agitation. As it turned out there had been no cause for anxiety. It is impossible to imagine a more charming young mother than Muriel. I have the honour to be godfather.

“There’s a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,  
When two that are linked in one heavenly tie,  
With heart never changing and brow never cold,  
Love on through all ills, and love on till they die !  
One hour of a passion so sacred is worth  
Whole ages of heartless and wandering bliss ;  
And oh ! if there be an Elysium on earth,  
It is this, it is this !”

THE END.

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